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Kremlin Bans iPhones for Officials Involved in Putin's 2024 Re-Election – Kommersant

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Kremlin staff involved in President Vladimir Putin's 2024 re-election campaign have been banned from using their iPhones for fear of espionage, the Kommersant daily reported Monday, citing an unnamed source with knowledge of the decision.

Officials in the Russian presidential administration's domestic policy, public projects, State Council and IT departments — known as the Kremlin's "internal bloc" — face an April 1 deadline to discard their U.S.-made devices.

"The iPhone is over. Either throw it away or give it to children," Kommersant quoted one of the officials as saying.

"Everyone will have to do it in March," they said.

The iPhone ban may also affect internal policy officials in Russia's regional administrations,

the publication added.

Sergei Kiriyenko, the Kremlin's first deputy chief of staff, reportedly issued a "final word" on whether to ban iPhones after a debate on the issue broke out at a seminar near Moscow in early March.

According to Kommersant, the Kremlin believes iPhones are more susceptible to hacking and espionage by Western specialists than other smartphones.

Citing its source, the publication said the Kremlin urged officials to replace their iPhones with Androids or their Chinese or Russian-made analogs. The administration has also reportedly floated the possibility of replacing the officials' discarded iPhones with "new and secure" devices themselves.

The reported iPhone ban comes as the Russian government seeks to wean the country off Western technology with a so-called "sovereign mobile ecosystem" based on the Russian operating system Avrora.

The Kremlin on Monday said that its staff are not permitted to use smartphones of any kind for official purposes.

"Whatever they are, there is no difference. Any smartphone is quite a transparent mechanism, no matter what operating system, Android or iOS. Naturally, they are not used for official purposes," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

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