

Government Campaign Aims to Warn Russians Against VPN Use

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Moskva Agency

The Russian authorities have launched a campaign to warn the Russian public about what it says are the dangers of using virtual private networks (VPNs), the software that allows internet users to access blocked websites.

Despite one of the main reasons for using a VPN being the enhanced security it offers users, a statement issued by Russia's internet watchdog Roskomnadzor warned that VPNs increase the risk of having personal information stolen by hackers, the Russian news agency Interfax [quoted](#) it as saying on Monday.

Meanwhile, videos designed to look like advertising but actually created by government-linked technology firm [ROCIT](#) have been appearing on Russian social networks also warning of the dangers of using VPNs.

In one video [posted](#) on Russian social network VKontakte, a waiter at a restaurant is shown blackmailing a customer who uses a VPN after finding out he is cheating on his wife.

"You have to pay for data security. Sometimes the price is too high," the voiceover in the video says. "In pursuit of viewing content on banned social networks, think about whether it's worth it."

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Moscow has blocked access to nearly all independent online media outlets as well as to international social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, in a move designed to make it extremely difficult to access any information deviating from that provided by Russian state media.

As accessing independent news sites in Russia is currently only possible with a VPN, launching a disinformation campaign to dissuade the public from using the software would be a logical measure in the Kremlin's continuing crackdown on free speech.

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