

Russia Eyes Banning Officials From Using Foreign Messaging Apps

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Russia is considering banning government employees from using foreign messaging apps for official communications or contacting citizens, the RBC news website [reported](#) Monday.

The proposed ban — one of dozens of planned legal and regulatory amendments ostensibly aimed at combatting phone and internet scammers — would tighten control over officials' communications with independent and foreign journalists.

Authorities justify the measures by saying that foreign messaging services are increasingly exploited for criminal schemes and are difficult to regulate.

"We have analyzed in detail the most common fraudulent schemes, including deception through calls and messages, hacking of personal accounts and registration of loans on other people's passports. Based on this analysis, we have developed measures to protect citizens from such threats," Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Grigorenko told RBC.

Employees of the Central Bank, credit institutions, telecoms operators and advertising agencies would also be barred from communicating via foreign messaging apps under the planned changes, RBC reported.

Officials will be able to use approved domestic messengers once they verify their identities through a state identification portal, and phone screens will be required to indicate when a call comes from an organization or an international number.

Related article: [Phone Scammers Coax Russians to Set Fire to Military Offices – Reports](#)

Additionally, government investigative and security agencies will be able to request information of interest from telecom operators once the amendments are implemented.

The proposal cites Interior Ministry data stating that crimes involving information and communication technologies rose by 30% in 2023 to 677,000 cases. In the first nine months of 2024, these crimes increased by another 16.4% to 564,000 cases. Of these, 20% involved theft from bank accounts.

The proposal's authors argue that enabling real-time information exchange between government agencies, banks and digital platforms will help swiftly identify and block suspicious activities while alerting law enforcement to potential crimes.

A representative of the Digital Development Ministry told RBC that the amendments "will not negatively impact citizens."

A government legislative commission is set to review the proposals in the coming days, with implementation planned for 2025-26, the ministry's representative told RBC.

State communications watchdog Roskomnadzor will compile a list of foreign platforms to be banned under the amendments, RBC said.

The planned measures come days after President Vladimir Putin ordered the government, the FSB and the Interior Ministry to develop measures to block criminal calls from Ukraine and other "unfriendly" countries, a designation primarily aimed at Western states.

In December, Putin [claimed](#) that "Ukrainian phone scammers" had stolen more than 250 billion rubles (\$2.5 billion) from Russian citizens in 2024 alone and accused Kyiv of making phone fraud a part of "state policy."

According to the independent Mediazona news website, phone scammers have [coordinated](#) at least 187 arson attacks on Russian military registration and enlistment offices, banks, cars and other facilities since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly three years ago.

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