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Kremlin-Backed Messaging App Max to Come Pre-Installed on Devices Starting Next Month

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Russia's new state-backed messaging app Max will come pre-installed on all devices sold in the country starting on Sept. 1, the government announced Thursday.

"Max is expected to serve as a multifunctional information exchange service, offering secure messaging and convenient digital services from both government and business," an official statement read.

The app will replace a standalone messenger from tech giant VK, which has been on the government's mandatory pre-install list since 2023. Russia has required smartphones, tablets and computers to carry domestic software since 2021.

The move comes as authorities test restrictions on foreign messaging services, with Russians reporting disruptions on WhatsApp and Telegram calls since early August. Last week, state

regulator Roskomnadzor said it was “partially” blocking calls to combat fraud, extortion and terrorism.

Earlier, independent news outlets reported that the Kremlin ordered officials and lawmakers to migrate their Telegram channels to Max. The State Duma’s press office said Thursday that it would now post comments exclusively on Max and no longer on Telegram.

Critics see the rollout as part of wider efforts to tighten state control over the internet, which authorities justify as necessary to protect minors and fight terrorism.

The government also said Thursday that its mandatory pre-install list will include the domestic app store RuStore for Apple devices on Sept. 1 and the free TV app Lime HD TV for smart TVs starting Jan. 1, 2026.

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