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Roskomnadzor Confirms It's Blocking Snapchat and FaceTime Calls

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Anastasia Shuraeva / pexels

Russia's state communications watchdog has intensified its campaign against foreign messaging platforms, blocking Snapchat on Thursday just hours after restricting access to video and voice calls on Apple's FaceTime service.

Roskomnadzor said Snapchat was being used "to organize and carry out terrorist activities in the country" and to facilitate fraud and other crimes, according to a statement carried by state media.

The app, famous for its disappearing photo and video messages, had 7.6 million users in Russia in 2022.

Roskomnadzor issued a similar explanation earlier in the day when announcing restrictions on Apple's FaceTime, although users in Russia had already begun reporting problems with the

app back in September.

The Moscow Times tried to call several people inside Russia using FaceTime but was unable to connect. However, video and voice calls are still possible on the app when users turn on a VPN.

Thursday's announcement marked the first confirmation that authorities had moved to restrict Snapchat and FaceTime.

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The restrictions come as Roskomnadzor steps up pressure on WhatsApp, the country's most widely used messenger with nearly 100 million users.

The watchdog warned last week that a full block of WhatsApp was possible, accusing the Meta-owned service of failing to comply with Russia's data-localization laws and of what it called repeated legal violations tied to alleged terrorist activity and fraud.

Despite the official terrorism claims, the internet rights group Na Svyazi has accused authorities of trying to push Russians toward Max, a government-backed messaging app that the group says gives officials full access to users' private conversations.

The FaceTime and Snapchat restrictions also came a day after Roskomnadzor blocked access to the U.S.-owned gaming platform Roblox, accusing it of distributing extremist materials, promoting "LGBT propaganda" and "negatively impacting the spiritual and moral development of children."

Roblox was the most-downloaded mobile game in Russia in 2023.

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