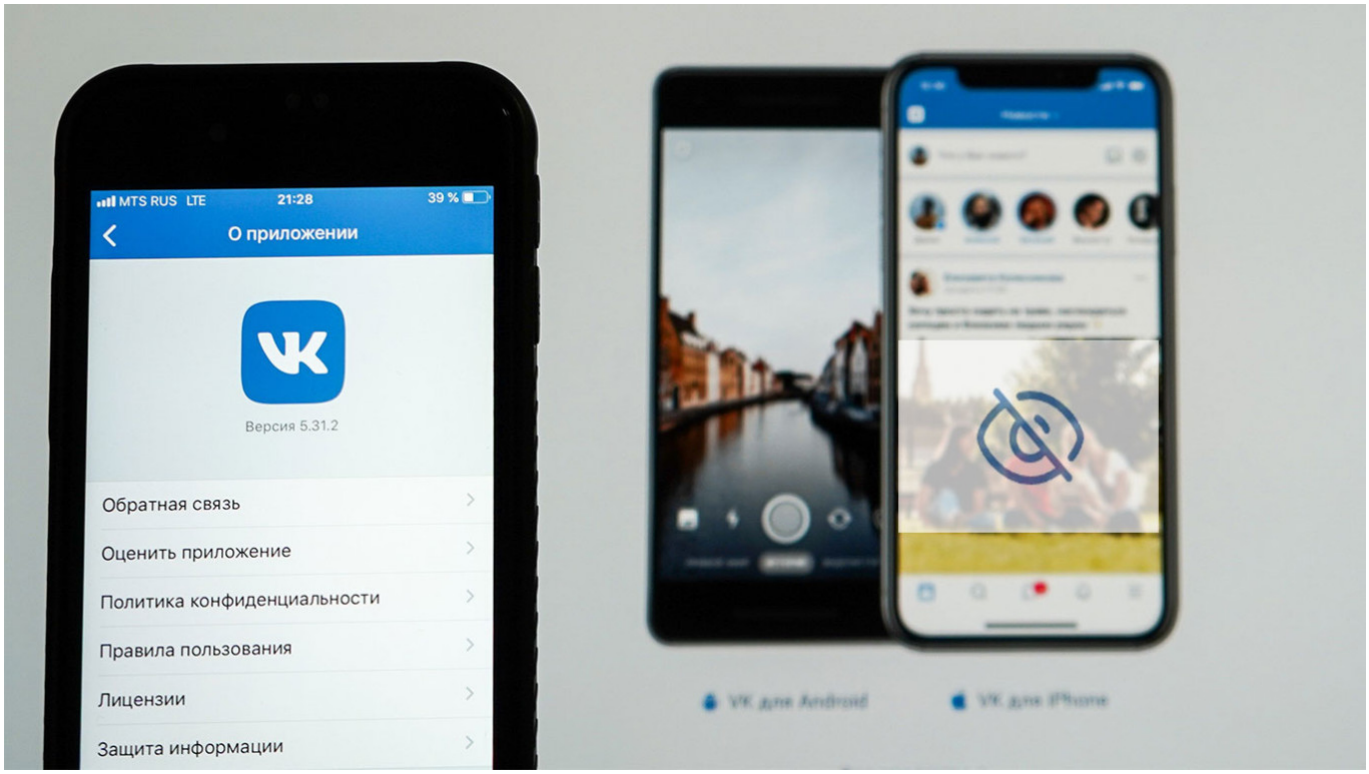
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VK Accuses Apple of Removing Apps From App Store

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Moskva News Agency

Russian tech company VK accused Apple on Thursday of removing its apps from the App Store, calling the move "completely unprompted and unacceptable."

"Apple is cutting off Russian users from highly popular services used by tens of millions of people every single day," VK said in a statement.

The company warned iPhone users that they will no longer receive push notifications for its suite of apps, which includes the social media platforms VKontakte and Odnoklassniki.

The Moscow Times was able to confirm that VK apps are no longer available on the App Store. Apple did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that the Russian government expects an explanation from Apple for the removal of VK apps and advised Russians to switch to other operating systems.

Related article: Apple Removes Kremlin-Backed Messaging App Max From App Store

Apple previously removed VK's apps from its App Store in September 2022 following British sanctions, though it restored access less than a month later.

In its statement on Thursday, VK said it has "never been subject to sanctions and has never appeared on any sanctions list."

VK CEO Vladimir Kiriyenko, who is the son of Kremlin adviser Sergei Kiriyenko, is currently under U.S., EU and British sanctions.

While VK apps remain available to Android users, the removal from iOS deals a blow to a company that has become a cornerstone of Russia's efforts to build domestic alternatives to foreign tech platforms and tighten state control over the country's digital infrastructure.

Earlier this month, Apple removed Russia's state-backed messaging app Max from the App Store to comply with sanctions.

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