

# Major US Companies Ban Controversial Chinese App TikTok While it Becomes an Acquisition Target for Microsoft

by Jenny Kanevsky | Aug 14, 2020 | News | 0 comments



Already popular, the social media app **TikTok** has grown exponentially in the wake of COVID-19. TikTok's users include celebrities, teenagers, and others who dance or lip-sync to short audio clips. Despite a seemingly innocuous premise, ownership by Chinese internet company ByteDance makes TikTok suspect, raising security concerns. Washington officials are increasingly worried that via TikTok, the Chinese government could access and misuse sensitive information about American users. Every app download represents a potential risk, exposing sensitive personal, corporate, and government data. In recent days, President Trump has even talked of banning TikTok entirely from the US, alarming both users and the app maker.

Although owned by China's ByteDance, the world's most valuable startup, TikTok does not operate in China and, as such, is not subject to Chinese laws. TikTok is an independent subsidiary with US-based servers and a recently-named American CEO. Despite these ties to US operations, the US government and corporate America are exceedingly wary.

**Wells Fargo** recently demanded that employees remove the app from corporate-owned devices, citing privacy and security interests. Additionally, **Amazon** directed employees to remove TikTok

from all devices only to amend that within hours, allowing TikTok access from employee laptops but not mobile phones. Amazon's initial ban would have been the app's most substantial corporate security threat warning.

US officials claim the app poses a national security risk given its ties to China, with other organizations moving to ban the app. The **US military** disallows soldiers from installing the app, and policymakers have proposed banning TikTok from all US government devices.

While talk of a complete US TikTok boycott is in the air, so is an effort to legitimize TikTok. As President Trump currently vows to ban the app, he has also approved its US purchase, with stipulations. Microsoft is in talks to acquire TikTok's US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand operations, and the President has agreed. However, several preconditions attach, including purchase completion on or before September 15, or the US ban goes forward. The President also wants the US Treasury to receive a portion of the deal's payment, although he has not specified how this will work.

The TikTok debate parallels broader concerns related to US security and the nation's relationship with China. However, President Trump's agreement to total US-corporate TikTok ownership is promising for app users and Microsoft, should the deal go through. As one of social media's most popular apps, a robust US market wants to continue using TikTok. If Microsoft's acquisition plans succeed, it will make millions of Americans happy.

While a Microsoft acquisition may address the short-term TikTok issue, it does not adequately solve the overarching security and privacy issues associated with apps like TikTok. The best way to protect end-users, corporate, and government entities is with a Virtual Mobility Solution like **Hypori**. Hypori Virtual Mobility's BYOD solution maintains 100% separation of personal devices, including apps and sensitive corporate or government data.

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