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## TikTok...what is the next move?

The United States Government continues to pressure TikTok for sending user data to China (and subsequently the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)). Recently, cyber experts at Switzerland-based ProtonMail have presented more information that affirms the charge. The information is not only shared with the CCP but is also censored and surveilled across its borders. It is highly probable that China could even exert influence over TikTok parent ByteDance. The big question is whether the app will be sold off or banned outright.

This app is now installed on hundreds of millions of devices. Currently, there is a ban on federal employees installing the app on government-issued devices. A ban would result in TikTok being added to a US Commerce Department entity list, a move that seems highly likely in the upcoming weeks. There is no solid proof, however, that TikTok sends any data to China, which TikTok owners have been saying. The company claims its US CEO and its Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) have decades of US military and law enforcement experience.

ProtonMail's warning argues that TikTok's "zealous data collection, its use of Chinese infrastructure, and its parent company's close CCP ties make it a perfect tool for massive surveillance and data collection by the Chinese government." In law enforcement parlance, they have the means, motive, and opportunity. ProtonMail's reviewed TikTok's "data collection policies, lawsuits, cybersecurity white papers, past security vulnerabilities, and its privacy policy," and concluded that it finds "TikTok to be a grave privacy threat that likely shares data with the Chinese government. [ProtonMail recommends] everyone approach TikTok with great caution, especially if your threat model includes the questionable use of your personal data or Chinese government surveillance."

ProtonMail's conclusion on TikTok is pretty stark: "The fact that TikTok is owned by a Chinese company, one that has explicitly said it would deepen its cooperation with the Chinese Communist Party, makes this excessive data collection even more concerning. The Chinese government has a history of strong-arming and co-opting Chinese tech companies into sharing their data and then using this data to intimidate, threaten, censor, or engage in human rights abuses."

## Who are TikTok's power players?

- Kevin Mayer- CEO (formerly of Disney)
- Zhang Yiming- TikTok ByteDance Founder and CEO
- Vanessa Pappas- US general manager (former major player at YouTube)
- Michael Beckerman- VP and head of US public policy (former CEO and President of the Internet Association)
- Kudzi Chikumbu- Director of creator community (previously worked for Musical.ly)
- Blake Chandlee- VP, global business solutions (previously at Facebook for 12 years working global partnerships)
- Erich Andersen- Global general counsel (previously at Microsoft for over 20 years where he was vice president and company's lead counsel for intellectual property)

The Swiss-based company goes on to warn TikTok users that "from a security and privacy standpoint, TikTok is an extremely dangerous social media platform. Its potential for mass collection of data from hundreds of millions of adults, teenagers, and children poses a grave risk to privacy." Its advice to those users is to proceed "with great caution... and if this concerns you, you should strongly consider deleting TikTok and its associated data."

## Sources

<https://www.businessinsider.com/tiktok-most-important-executives-in-charge-bytedance-alex-zhu-2020-2#erich-andersen-global-general-counsel-7>

A year and a half after its debut in the US, TikTok is taking steps to distance itself from its home country. The app is also now reportedly searching for a CEO to run day-to-day operations while based in the US. TikTok president Alex Zhu  
Advantage no translation required---Steganography

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