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ByteDance Plans Standalone TikTok App for U.S.

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A major shake-up is coming for TikTok users in the United States as ByteDance prepares to roll out a new standalone app to comply with mounting political pressure.

ByteDance Ltd. (ByteDance), the Chinese tech giant behind TikTok, is reportedly developing a US-only version of the popular short-form video app. The new version, currently codenamed "M2," is expected to launch on September 5, replacing the existing TikTok app for US users.

This move comes as ByteDance faces a fast-approaching deadline to divest its US-based TikTok assets or risk being banned. The deadline, extended to September 17 by former President Donald Trump, reflects long-standing concerns in Washington about foreign ownership of platforms with access to vast amounts of American user data. While the current administration has not enforced a full ban, pressure has remained steady, especially as tensions continue over data privacy and international influence in the tech space.

According to a report by *The Information*, ByteDance is preparing the new app to comply with both political directives and platform distribution rules. Apple, which operates the App Store, typically restricts multiple versions of the same app from appearing under one listing. Launching M2 as a separate product allows ByteDance to tailor its platform specifically to US users without violating Apple's policies.

Although TikTok has not officially confirmed these plans, the shift could affect approximately 170 million users in the United States. For many small businesses, influencers, and content creators who rely on TikTok for visibility and revenue, the potential disruption raises questions about audience retention, data continuity, and feature availability.

Creator Concerns

Jennie Smythe, CEO of Girlilla Marketing, whose clients include notable names like Willie Nelson and Iliza Shlesinger, told *CNET* that any major app migration can create anxiety among creators and brands. "Anytime there is a migration or a major feature revamp on any network, it certainly creates work and worry," she said. Smythe noted that creators are especially concerned about whether their audiences will make the transition, and whether their content will remain accessible or become restricted by region.

The report suggests that while the M2 app will go live in September, the current version of TikTok may remain available until March 2026. A grace period would also give users time to shift their profiles, content, and followers to the new app. However, whether the M2 version will limit access to global content or introduce new restrictions to satisfy US regulators remains unclear.

The motivation behind this change goes beyond just compliance. ByteDance appears to be hedging against future regulatory actions by segmenting its operations. With a standalone

US version, the company can implement local data storage, region-specific policies, and more robust content oversight, all measures likely intended to reduce lawmakers' scrutiny.

As of now, TikTok has declined to comment on the development of M2 or its long-term strategy in the United States.