

Apple withdrew WhatsApp and Threads from the App Store in China

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Apple has removed two Meta apps from the App Store in China at the request of the country's government. Both WhatsApp and Threads are no longer available in the App Store, preventing new installs for these popular messaging and social networking apps.

Why did Apple remove these two applications in China?

The Wall Street Journal first reported about this last Thursday night in the US. WSJ said Apple has been asked by China's top Internet regulator to remove the Threads and WhatsApp apps and not make them available to iPhone users in China.

Apple told 9to5Mac that the Cyberspace Administration of China cited national security concerns in making its request.

Apple said: *'We have an obligation to follow the laws of the countries where we operate, even if we disagree.'* *'The Cyberspace Administration of China ordered the removal of these apps from the China App Store based on national security concerns. These apps are still available for download on all other app stores'.*

From Apple's perspective, the immediate risk of not meeting legal requirements is the possibility that the App Store will be closed in China.

VPN will be the solution to overcome limitations

Threads has been available in China since July last year, as one of the top 5 apps. China bans access to Meta services so it's a bit surprising that Threads has remained around for almost a year. It's also surprising that WhatsApp has been around for this long.

Technically, Meta's services are still accessible through VPN tools, by spoofing the location. Presumably, iPhone users can still access services using VPN tools if the app is installed.

Apple regularly responds to China's requests to remove software from the App Store, including VPN, news, and social media apps when requested.

Time for TikTok to take the throne!



This request comes at a very interesting time, as Apple CEO Tim Cook recently visited the country. The TikTok divestment bill appears to be currently stalled in Congress, so it seems like a natural reaction for China to view Threads and WhatsApp as national security concerns.

WhatsApp and Threads could be the first of many similar apps to be banned by China between now and this summer. That's how long the regulation for unregistered foreign apps will take effect.

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