

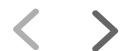
Apple removes ICE tracking apps after pressure by Trump administration

By Kanishka Singh and Jaspreet Singh

October 3, 2025 2:56 PM CDT · Updated 18 hours ago



[1/3] Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents detain a man after conducting a raid at the Cedar Run apartment complex in Denver, Colorado, U.S., February 5, 2025. REUTERS/Kevin Mohatt [Purchase Licensing Rights](#)



Summary Companies

- ICE at the center of Trump's hardline immigration agenda
- Rights advocates concerned that ICE's actions can flout due process
- Tech firms have sought warmer ties with Trump during his second term

WASHINGTON, Oct 3 (Reuters) - Apple ([AAPL.O](#)) said on Thursday that it had removed ICEBlock and other similar [ICE-tracking apps](#) from its App Store after it was contacted by President Donald Trump's administration, in a rare instance of apps being taken down due to a U.S. federal government demand.

Alphabet's Google ([GOOGL.O](#)) ^{LJ} also removed similar apps on Thursday for policy violations, but the company said it was not approached by the Justice Department before taking the action.

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The app alerts users to Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in their area, which the Justice Department says could increase the risk of assault on U.S. agents.

ICE has been a central part of Trump's hardline immigration agenda. Its agents have regularly raided and arrested migrants, and rights advocates say free speech and due process are often being infringed in the government's deportation drive.

Apple's action may increase scrutiny of tech firms' growing ties to the Trump administration. Many companies, including the iPhone maker, have sought to avoid clashes with a White House that has not been shy about issuing threats — particularly around tariffs — against specific firms.

"Based on information we've received from law enforcement about the safety risks associated with ICEBlock, we have removed it and similar apps from the App Store," Apple said in an emailed statement.

Fox Business first reported the app's removal by Apple on Thursday. The Justice Department later confirmed that it had contacted Apple to pull the app and that the company complied.

Google said its policies prohibit apps with a high risk of abuse. ICEBlock was never available on Google's Play Store.

"ICEBlock is designed to put ICE agents at risk just for doing their jobs, and violence against law enforcement is an intolerable red line that cannot be crossed," U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a statement.

Joshua Aaron, the Texas-based creator of ICEBlock, disputed that characterization and criticized Apple's decision.

"I am incredibly disappointed by Apple's actions today. Capitulating to an authoritarian regime is never the right move," Aaron told Reuters. Now even launching a website would likely be met with takedowns, he said, adding that his legal team will decide on the next steps.

Bondi has previously argued that Aaron is "not protected" under the Constitution and that they are looking at prosecuting him, warning him to "watch out."

Civilian surveillance of federal immigration agents has grown more assertive since Trump returned to office, with activists saying they aim to protect their communities from aggressive ICE enforcement.

In cities such as Washington, residents also rely on encrypted chats to share enforcement updates, though how often apps like ICEBlock actually alerted neighbors remains unclear.

Six legal experts have told Reuters that surveillance of ICE is largely protected under the U.S. Constitution — as long as the activists don't interfere with that work. Courts have long held that recording law enforcement

activities in public areas is legal.

CHINA MAKES THE MOST DEMANDS

Since Trump took office, ICE has raided multiple facilities with immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally, and has ramped up enforcement with \$75 billion in new funding through 2029 for ICE. The agency has also arrested visa holders and permanent U.S. residents targeted by the Trump administration over pro-Palestinian advocacy.

Legal experts have told Reuters that surveillance of ICE is largely protected under the U.S. Constitution, as long as they do not try to obstruct law enforcement.

Apple removed more than 1,700 apps from its App Store in 2024 in response to government demands, but the vast majority — more than 1,300 — came from China, followed by Russia with 171 and South Korea with 79.

Over the last three years, the United States has not appeared as one of the countries where apps were removed due to government demands, according to company application transparency reports.

A majority of Apple's iPhones are manufactured in China, making the company particularly sensitive to tariff policies. The White House has floated potential taxes on imports of chips included in devices — that would hit the company's substantial imports from China and other countries.

Apple removes thousands of apps from its App Store every year, including more than 82,500 in 2024, for other reasons, such as design-related issues, fraud or intellectual property infringement.

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Kanishka Singh is a breaking news reporter for Reuters in Washington DC, who primarily covers US politics and national affairs in his current role. His past breaking news coverage has spanned across a range of topics like the Black Lives Matter movement; the US elections; the 2021 Capitol riots and their follow up probes; the Brexit deal; US-China trade tensions; the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan; the COVID-19 pandemic; and a 2019 Supreme Court verdict on a religious dispute site in his native India.

