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Subject: [ALL-UNIVERSITY] RWU INFOSEC Monthly Briefing [March]
Date: Thursday, March 30, 2023 1:10:55 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)



Information Security [INFOSEC] Briefing

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March - 2023 Cybersecurity Focus

Is TikTok a national threat? The Biden administration and politicians from both parties think so and voice concerns with the issue of certain nations, such as China, attempting to use digital technologies and Americans' data in ways that pose unacceptably high threats to national security. As such, the US Government now prohibits TikTok on federal devices. In addition, legislation is underway to restrict this software download on any U.S.-based smartphone.

In response, TikTok stated it hopes the US Congress will look into options that won't have the effect of silencing the voices of millions of Americans when it comes to resolving national security concerns. Mao Ning, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, stated that the American government "has been overextending the notion of national security and abusing state power to repress foreign corporations." Furthermore, during a recent Senate hearing, TikTok's President, Mr. Shou Chew, brushed-off allegations suggesting his company colludes with the Chinese Government and seeking to avert a full ban of its App in the United States.

What's at risk? Currently, approximately 150 million TikTok accounts are registered in the United States. Based on TikTok's legal terms and conditions, the personal data they obtain includes time spent on the App, cellular carrier information, type of smartphone, your device's IP address, direct messages you send or receive, and website cookie/tracking data. Plus, the App requests access to your device's contacts, photos, microphone, camera, and geolocation. From a security perspective, this can be a lot of information to share, and many Americans agree. A New York Times poll shows that most Americans see TikTok as a national threat and support Congress. However, approximately 61% of Gen Z (18-29-year-olds) do not feel this way and see the proposed ban as violating their First Amendment rights. Regardless of the outcome, this debate is something to watch in the coming months!

Thank you, and wishing you a wonderful Spring!

Sincerely,
IT Management

Don't take the bait! IT will never ask you for your username and password via email. Phishing e-mails attempt to deceive you into giving up private information in a response to a message or by leading you to a fraudulent web site.

For more tips about phishing, go to www.phishinginfo.org.

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