

Social media clashes with Russian officials over invasion of Ukraine

Article

The news: American social media companies spent the weekend in conflict with the Russian government and state-sponsored media after days of seeing their platforms flooded with news and images from Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine.

The social media battleground: Social media became a crucial information center in the days surrounding Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24. Journalists and citizens in both

countries shared news on the platforms, which raced to battle misinformation and find their place in an increasingly entangled web of international sanctions and pressures from Russian regulators. Here's how major platforms are responding.

Google restricts state-backed media:

- **Google** has disabled access to Ukraine [live traffic data](#) in Google Maps, which journalists said could be used to track troop movements. And Saturday, it prevented state-backed media like RT (formerly Russia Today) and other channels from earning ad revenue on **YouTube**.
- **YouTube is a popular platform** for pro-Russian media and commentators who have millions of subscribers on the platform, putting Google in a complicated position. Russian media regulator **Roskomnadzor** wrote to Google the next day demanding restrictions on the chosen channels be lifted.

Meta and Russia clash over censorship: **Meta** is taking steps to avoid the issues of user safety and misinformation that have plagued its platform during international crises.

- The Russian government blocked access to parts of **Facebook** last week after the platform refused to stop fact-checking posts from Russian media, which led the platform to [restrict access](#) to certain state-sponsored outlets in Ukraine, per the Ukrainian government's request.
- On Saturday, Meta [announced](#) a series of changes regarding the crisis, including privacy features for Russian and Ukrainian Facebook profiles, the development of a special operations center monitoring Facebook "around the clock," and expanding fact-checking capabilities in the region.
- Like YouTube, Facebook has also [prevented certain pages](#) from advertising and monetizing content. Meta has made repeated public statements regarding communications with Russian officials, often [saying it refused](#) to implement changes ordered by Russian authorities.

Twitter gets throttled: Russia has attempted to throttle access to Twitter entirely after it became the de facto platform for journalists and citizens to share news and images from the conflict.

- Twitter said it is aware of the attempt to throttle its service and that it was "working to keep our service safe and accessible."
- As news poured in, Twitter also faced a significant misinformation crisis. Footage from older conflicts and clips of cityscapes with audio of gunfire edited over them rapidly went viral on

the platform. One clip, which purportedly showed a Russian airplane dodging Ukrainian anti-aircraft fire, quickly became among the most-watched of the conflict before it was discovered that it was footage from [a military simulator video game](#).

What this means: Social media giants have been under a magnifying glass over the past few years for their handling of misinformation, user privacy, and more.

- As the Russia-Ukraine conflict rages on and platforms face an unprecedented stream of posts, firms are trying to demonstrate a reversal of long-standing issues—and remain on the right side of the national mood in opposition to Russia’s invasion.