

Big Tech struggles to respond to war in Ukraine

Article

The news: As various countries pile on economic sanctions against Russia, the world is watching the reaction of Big Tech companies whose economic power could add significant pressure on the invading forces.

Response from Big Tech:

- Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine last week has forced technology companies to relocate their staff and close their offices. Ukraine has an estimated **200,000 tech specialists** working for companies like **Google, Snap, Oracle, Revolut, and Wise**, [per](#) Insider.

- **Uber** and **Lyft** are mostly focused on helping [move](#) employees to safety.
- **Airbnb** is offering free temporary [housing](#) to 100,000 refugees.
- **Ukraine's Vice Prime Minister Mykhailo Fedorov** [published](#) an open letter imploring **Apple CEO Tim Cook** to stop supplying products and services to Russia. While there's no official response from Apple, Cook did tweet that he "was deeply concerned with the situation in Ukraine."
- Social media companies are [wrestling](#) with censorship regarding Russia, which has **70 million users**, many of whom rely on services like **Facebook**, **Twitter**, and **Telegram** to stay informed and connected.
- **Google**, **Meta**, **Microsoft**, and **YouTube** have [responded](#) against Russia by preventing state-owned channels from earning revenue or running ads on their services and de-ranking search results.

Conflict of interest: Russia has intensified its [censorship campaign](#) and is warning companies like Apple, Meta, and Google that they must comply with [new laws](#) requiring the companies censor unfavorable content or face fines, arrests, or the blocking or slowing down of their services.

- Russia's [landing law](#), which took effect January 1, requires foreign websites, apps, or services with **over 500,000 daily users** to register with the government and open local offices, making them vulnerable to intimidation or coercion.
- Apple has reportedly complied with the law by opening an office in Moscow this month, [per](#) RepublicWorld.
- **TikTok** and **Spotify** have similarly [complied](#) with the landing law per Russian internet regulator **Roskomnadzor**, while Google, Meta, and Twitter are reportedly complying with some parts of the law but not others.

The problem: Multinational Big Tech companies—which have the power and the influence of [nation-states](#)—are now finding themselves in a delicate predicament where much more is expected of them in response to the war in Ukraine.

- Big Tech aiding Ukraine by imposing sanctions against Russia could result in loss of business or possible retaliation in the form of fines, arrests, or service shutdowns.

- On the other hand, no response or a pro-Russia response to the crisis could be seen as compliance with the authoritarian government to continue profits, which will lead to a negative brand image.