

May 5, 2022 | Myanmar

US tech firms enabling Myanmar junta propaganda ***Min Aung Hlaing launches US-built Apple and Google apps***

Min Aung Hlaing has launched Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV) propaganda apps on Apple's [App Store](#) and Alphabet's [Google Play Store](#), as well as a website, using Google and Apple logos as his [backdrop](#).

The MRTV apps were developed by the US company [Apps Web Social LLC](#), which listed them on the App Store and Play Store on behalf of the junta.

The apps are [claimed](#) to livestream broadcast content via international satellites, and distribute articles.

Apps Web Social LLC is registered in Iowa and has an office in Florida.

The Myanmar military junta uses MRTV to disseminate propaganda, disinformation and fake news, including regular content representing democratic actors as "terrorists" and publishing photos of torture victims to spread fear.

MRTV was also complicit in the 2017 genocide against the Rohingya, denying Rohingya identity, portraying Rohingya as "terrorists" and denying the military's "clearance operations".

MRTV operates under the junta's Ministry of Information, led by retired Major General Maung Maung Ohn, who is sanctioned by the [EU](#).

Maung Maung Ohn was the former Chief Minister of Rakhine State under the military's proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party government in the lead up to the Rohingya genocide, and played a prominent role [denying persecution](#) against Rohingya.

The junta's State Administrative Council (SAC), which has control over MRTV, is [sanctioned in the US](#), raising questions over whether Apps Web Social has complied with US sanctions.

The junta's former information minister, Chit Naing, was [sanctioned](#) by the US on July 2, 2021, shortly before he was replaced by Maung Maung Ohn.

The registrar for the junta's new domain name, mrtvmedia.com, is GoDaddy.com, also a US company.

The junta's apps carry serious privacy risks, enabling the military to track a user's precise location, record audio and take photos and video, according to its listed Play Store permissions.

Apple and Alphabet have long allowed the Myanmar military to use their platforms, and are both listed on the Burma Campaign UK's [Dirty List](#).

Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung says: “By continuing to allow the terrorist Myanmar military junta to use their platforms, Alphabet and Apple stand complicit in the junta’s dissemination of disinformation and hate speech.

“We call on Alphabet and Apple to immediately and fully ban the Myanmar military, and all entities they control, from their app stores and service offerings.

“Alphabet, Apple, GoDaddy.com and App Web Social must take action to stop contributing to human rights violations in Myanmar, according to their responsibilities under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and the OECD Guidelines.

“We condemn Apps Web Social for supporting and profiting from the junta’s campaign of terror, in which MRTV is a key part of the psychological warfare that the Myanmar military is waging against the people of Myanmar.

“Apps Web Social should disclose how they are receiving payments for their work on the MRTV apps, and if they have received a licence from the US Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control.

“We urge the US government to close all remaining loopholes that may allow the Myanmar military junta and its conglomerates to transact with US companies, including through further sanctions designations against MRTV, all other junta-controlled media and Maung Maung Ohn.”

More information:

Read about the Myanmar military’s use of international satellites in our 2020 report, [Nodes of Corruption, Lines of Abuse](#)

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