

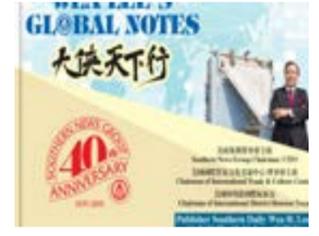


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Make Today Different

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Hong Kong tycoon Jimmy Lai arrested under security law, bearing out 'worst fears'



Media mogul Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, founder of Apple Daily (C) is detained by the national security unit in Hong Kong, China August 10, 2020. REUTERS/Tyrone Siu

HONG KONG (Reuters) - Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai became the highest-profile person arrested under a new national security law on Monday, detained over suspected collusion with foreign forces as around 200 police searched the offices of his Apple Daily newspaper.

Mainland-born Lai, who was smuggled into the British colony of Hong Kong on a fishing boat when he was a penniless 12-year-old, has been one of the most prominent democracy activists in the now Chinese-ruled city and an ardent critic of Beijing.

His arrest comes amid Beijing's crackdown against pro-democracy opposition in the city and further stokes concerns about media and other promised freedoms when it returned to China in 1997. China imposed the sweeping new security law on Hong Kong on June 30, drawing condemnation from Western countries.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he was "deeply troubled" by reports of the arrest, calling it further proof that the Chinese Communist Party had "eviscerated" Hong Kong's freedoms and eroded the rights of its people.

RELATED COVERAGE
Pompeo deeply troubled by Hong Kong tycoon arrest
Hong Kong activist Agnes Chow arrested, says fellow activist

The arrest "bears out the worst fears that Hong Kong's national security law would be used to suppress critical pro-democracy opinion and restrict press freedom", said Steven Butler, the Committee to Protect Journalists' Asia programme coordinator.

Ryan Law, chief editor of Apple Daily, a staunch anti-government tabloid that also does investigative work, told Reuters the paper would not be intimidated.

"Business as usual," he said.

The security law punishes anything China considers subversion, secession, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces with up to life in prison. Critics say it crushes freedoms, while supporters say it will bring stability after prolonged anti-China, pro-democracy protests last year.

Beijing said it supported Lai's arrest.

A spokesman for China's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office told the official Xinhua news agency Lai was a representative of people who were "anti-China, anti-Hong Kong" and that he planned and instigated "illegal" protests, funded pro-independence forces and used his media group to spread rumours.

Lai, 71, had been a frequent visitor to Washington, where he has met officials, including Pompeo, to rally support for Hong Kong democracy, prompting Beijing to label him a "traitor".

Hong Kong police said they had arrested nine men and one woman, aged between 23 and 72, without naming them, adding that further arrests were possible.

Suspected offences included "collusion with a foreign country/external elements to endanger national security, conspiracy to defraud" and others, the police said.

Media mogul Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, founder of Apple Daily (C) is detained by the national security unit in Hong Kong, China August 10, 2020. REUTERS/Tyrone Siu

Apple Daily posted on its Facebook page a livestream of police officers roaming through its newsroom and rifling through files, and asking staff for identity documents.

Some executive offices were sealed off with red cordons. The police later wheeled in stacks of empty plastic containers. Lai himself was brought back to the office, initially in handcuffs.

"We can't worry that much, we can only go with the flow," Lai said, before being escorted into a police vehicle.

Police said around 200 officers entered the premises with a court warrant and collected 25 boxes of evidence after finishing the search. The law allows police to search premises without one "under exceptional circumstances".

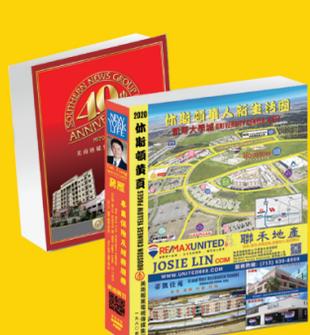
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Trump Bans U.S. 'Transactions' With TikTok And WeChat Declaring Them A "National Emergency"



[Photo/Shealah Craighead/The White House/Flickr]

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

President Trump has issued two sweeping executive orders banning "any transaction by any person, or with respect to any property, subject to the jurisdiction of the United States" with TikTok and WeChat. The executive orders say the bans go into effect 45 days from yesterday.

Trump's executive order against TikTok, while unprecedented for an app, isn't that surprising considering the president has been waging an ongoing war against that app for the past few months. What is more surprising is the second executive order against WeChat, which the president has generally remained quiet about in the past.

While TikTok is owned by China's ByteDance and is one of the most popular social media platforms out there, WeChat is owned by a completely separate Chinese company called Tencent and the app is one of the most popular messaging, mobile payment, and communication platforms in the world.

In both executive orders, Trump uses the same language, saying the apps present a "national emergency." In the TikTok executive order, Trump explained, "the spread in the United States of mobile ap-

plications developed and owned by companies in the People's Republic of China (China) continues to threaten the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States." In the WeChat executive order, he noted, "To protect our Nation, I took action to address the threat posed by one mobile application, TikTok. Further action is needed to address a similar threat posed by another mobile application, WeChat."



In short, Trump believes TikTok and WeChat could be funneling data about U.S. users to the Chinese Communist Party. What remains to be seen, however, is if either of these executive orders will be held up by the courts, as both TikTok and WeChat are sure to challenge them. As TikTok noted in a statement about the executive order:

This Executive Order risks undermining

global businesses' trust in the United States' commitment to the rule of law, which has served as a magnet for investment and spurred decades of American economic growth. And it sets a dangerous precedent for the concept of free expression and open markets. We will pursue all remedies available to us in order to ensure that the rule of law is not discarded and that our company and our users are treated fairly - if not by the Administration, then by the US courts.

Days before the executive order, Microsoft announced it was looking to purchase TikTok. The order should have no effect on those negotiations. Microsoft says it plans to announce its decision on any purchase by September 15, just days before the executive order goes into effect.

Related

Trump Cutting Off WeChat Would Be A Devastating Blow To Thousands Of Chinese Families In The U.S.

Key Points

President Donald Trump issued an executive order Thursday night that would place a ban on business transactions with WeChat.

WeChat is the primary service people in the U.S. use to talk with friends and family in China, since U.S.-based apps are already banned there.

If Trump's executive order goes through, people in the U.S. would have effectively no cost free way to talk to friends and loved ones in China.



A smart phone with the icons for the social networking apps WeChat, WhatsApp, Facebook FaceTime, and others are seen on a smartphone screen. (Photo/S3studio/Getty Images News)

When President Donald Trump late Thursday issued an executive order to

effectively ban WeChat in 45 days, it was a devastating blow to the U.S. users who rely on the app to communicate with family and friends in China.



WeChat operates a slew of services, such as ride hailing and making payments, within the app in China, but its flagship service is its messaging platform. It's picked up little traction in the United States compared with China, but the Chinese-owned messaging service is key for people who need to communicate between the two.

Banning the app would give those who use it with no other option to quickly communicate for free with friends and family in China. It's impossible for users to just switch over to U.S.-based messaging platforms, since China has already blocked the apps that Americans rely on, such as Facebook's Messenger and Instagram, Google and Snapchat.

WhatsApp, another popular global messaging service owned by Facebook, is also blocked in the country. Users can access the apps by going through a virtual private network, or VPN, but that's often inconsistent and not an easy fix.

The bans of U.S.-based apps in China have allowed WeChat to swoop in and

become a key service for funneling communication between the two countries.

WeChat is the only way for Chinese people to message family members daily updates or have regular calls with them. A ban would effectively cut off easy communication between millions of families. WeChat is the preferred means of communication over Apple iMessage or Facebook Messenger to chat.

The announced executive order has already scared investors. WeChat is owned by the tech giant Tencent, which saw shares fall 5.04% on Friday. Tencent is also a titan in the video gaming space, with stakes in companies such as Activision Blizzard and Riot Games, so the repercussions could extend beyond WeChat.

"We are reviewing the executive order to get a full understanding," a Tencent spokesperson told CNBC in an email.

The United States has recently ramped up its rhetoric against Chinese tech companies, with most of the attention going to TikTok, a social media platform operated by ByteDance.

But Microsoft has already emerged as a strong contender to acquire TikTok's U.S. business. There are no apparent leaders looking to save WeChat's business in the U.S., meaning it could get left behind. (Courtesy jhttps://www.cncb.com/)



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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

08/10/2020

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

Coronavirus Horrible Number

The United States on Sunday surpassed 5 million confirmed cases of the coronavirus according to data collected by John Hopkins University. We have both the highest number of confirmed cases and the most deaths of any country in the world.

The world's total confirmed cases is nearly 20 million, meaning that the U.S. accounts for 25% of that total. And we only have around 4% of the world's population.

In other words, for every 66 citizens we already have one case - such a horrible number!

Several U.S. lawmakers including Louie Gohmert, Mario Diaz-Balart and Governor of Ohio Mike DeWine also have confirmed cases of COVID-19. The former head of the FDA, Dr. Scott Gottlieb warned that the death toll could reach 300,000 by the end of this year.

The world's richest man, Bill Gates, said in an interview that two of the many issues are a failure to shut down and a lag in testing capabilities.

This is shame. We are the richest and most medically equipped country in the world and we still can't control this



pandemic. We still are observing a lot of people gathering at different locations and at functions without wearing masks.

A lot of ordinary citizens have lost their

jobs, but they still worry about the virus attacking their families. We are strongly urging all the politicians to act immediately to save our people and our nation.

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Editor's Choice



Media mogul Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, founder of Apple Daily is detained by the national security unit in Hong Kong. REUTERS/Tyrone Siu



Lightning strikes are seen above the skyline of Shanghai's financial district of Pudong, China. REUTER/Aly Song



Debris are seen in the port area after a blast in Beirut, Lebanon. REUTERS/Hannah McKay



A Vietnamese woman carries a stuffed animal while boarding a repatriation flight from Singapore to Vietnam amid spread of the coronavirus outbreak at Changi airport, Singapore. REUTERS/Mai Nguyen



Members of the Houston Fire Department carry the casket of Jerry Pacheco, a firefighter who died of coronavirus, at a memorial service in Houston, Texas. REUTERS/Callaghan O'Hare



A demonstrator uses a tennis racket to return a tear gas canister to riot police, during a protest in Beirut, Lebanon. REUTERS/Goran Tomasevic



The view from inside an unfinished cross-border tunnel found by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers in the sandy Sonoran desert terrain in San Luis, Arizona. REUTERS/Mike Blake



A woman hugs her dog at the village of Bourtzi, following flash floods on the island of Evia, Greece. Sotiris Dimitropoulos/Eurokinissi via REUTERS

THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS ON THE FARMS

Without Federal Protections, Farm Workers Risk Coronavirus Infection To Harvest Crops

It's a busy time for the tomato-producing farms in eastern Tennessee. Farms have staffed up with hundreds of workers, most of whom are Latino. Some live locally. Others are migrant workers who travel from farm to farm, chasing the summer growing seasons. Still others come from Mexico or Central America on temporary agricultural visas to work at certain farms. But, this year, the season is taking place under a cloud of coronavirus worries that, for these agricultural workers, hit close to home.

After all, the workers live in close quarters, sleeping in bunk beds, and sharing bathrooms and kitchens. They ride crowded buses to fields and often work in groups. And even though farm employees are deemed essential workers, they often don't have health insurance or paid sick leave. Farms have already reported outbreaks among hundreds of workers in states that include California, Washington, Florida and Michigan. And yet, the federal government has not established any enforceable rules either to protect farmworkers from the coronavirus or to instruct employers what to do when their workers get sick.

The situation certainly isn't clear-cut, says Alexis Guild, director of health policy and programs at the advocacy group, Farmworker Justice. "I do think some employers are putting in necessary protections," Guild says. But she has heard of workers who, after testing positive for COVID-19, were still required to work or were sent back to their countries — an economic threat that creates a strong incentive for workers not to report mild symptoms. "I think it's hard to generalize. It really varies employer by employer."

Leaving it up to the farms

In June, 10 temporary workers out of about 80 at the Jones & Church Farms in Unicoi County, Tenn., tested positive for the coronavirus. Another farm

in that county had 38 workers test positive around the same time.



Farm laborers arrive for their shift in Greenfield, California, April 28, 2020. Traveling to the fields in crowded buses is one risk among others that workers often face daily. (Brent Stirton/Getty Images)



With the coronavirus spreading, farms try to keep workers like these in Greenfield, Calif. safe through physical distancing and other measures but advocates for laborers say protections are often not adequate. (Brent Stirton/Getty Images)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

positive for COVID-19, the farm kept them all in the same housing unit and away from the other workers — but those who were asymptomatic also kept working in the fields, though they were able to stay away from others on the job, says Jones Rogers.



In June, 10 of about 80 temporary workers at Jones & Church Farms in Unicoi County, Tenn., tested positive for COVID-19. Nationally, at least 3,600 positive cases have been reported among farmworkers. (Victoria Knight/KHN)

While the Department of Labor has not offered enforceable federal safety standards for COVID-19, it did collaborate with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to publish a set of voluntary, agriculture-specific guidelines. Those were released in June, just days after Jones & Church became aware of the farm's outbreak. Much of what had already been done at Jones & Church, though, tracked closely with those recommendations, which also suggested that workers be screened every day for COVID-19 symptoms and that those who become sick be given their own space to recover apart from others.

Other suggestions in the CDC and Labor Department directive, geared more toward indoor food-processing factories such as tomato-packing plants, included

installing plastic shields if 6 feet of distance isn't possible between workers, putting in hand-washing stations and providing personal protective equipment or cloth face coverings. Advocates say these guidelines are sound, in theory. Their glaring flaw is that they are voluntary.

"We don't believe that the health and safety of workers should be left to the good will of employers," says Maria Perales Sanchez, communications coordinator for Centro de Los Derechos del Migrante, an advocacy group with offices in both Mexico and the U.S.

A Department of Labor spokesperson offered a different take. "Employers are and will continue to be responsible for providing a workplace free of known health and safety hazards," the spokesperson says, adding that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's preexisting general-safety standards and CDC guidelines are used to determine workplace safety violations. OSHA is an agency within the Labor Department. Farm industry groups are apprehensive of any increased federal regulation.

"I don't think OSHA would be able to have some sort of mandatory regulation that wouldn't disadvantage some farmers," says Allison Crittenden, director of congressional relations for the American Farm Bureau Federation.



Fresh Harvest farm laborers harvest romaine lettuce on a machine with heavy plastic dividers that separate workers from each other in Greenfield, California, April 27, 2020. (Brent Stirton/Getty Images)

Farms have already put many COVID-19 protections in place, she says, "and if these actions are taking place in a voluntary way, we don't see that we need to have a mandatory requirement."

Difficulties in accessing health care

Migrant farmworkers, despite occupying an essential link in the country's food supply chain, often aren't provided with workplace benefits like health insurance or paid sick leave. Saul, the Virginia tobacco farmworker, says he didn't believe he has any health insurance. If he gets sick, he would need to tell his farm employer, who would then have to drive him to the doctor. The closest city to the farm is 15 miles away. Who is responsible for these costs — the worker or the farm — depends on individual circumstances. Many farms employ mostly Latino workers, and CDC data illustrates that it's much more likely for Hispanic or Latino people to be infected, hospitalized or die from COVID complications than white people. Experts also warn that because the COVID pandemic is disproportionately affecting people of color, it could widen preexisting health disparities.

Also, seeking a doctor's care can feel risky for migrant farmworkers. Workers who are undocumented may worry about being detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, while workers who have green cards may be concerned about the Trump administration's "public charge rule." This controversial rule weighs immigrants' use of public programs, including health care, against their applications for citizenship. However, the federal government has said seeking treatment for COVID-19 wouldn't fall under the rule. And while contact tracing is important to stop the spread of COVID-19 among farmworkers, many health departments don't have translators on staff who can speak Spanish or Indigenous Central American languages, nor has there been a systematic nationwide tracking of farmworker outbreaks thus far, as has been done with long-term care facilities outbreaks.

So "it's really hard to get a grasp on how many farmworkers specifically are testing positive," says Guild with Farmworker Justice. That could be an issue for tracing outbreaks, especially as the harvesting season ramps up for certain crops and farms bolster their workforces. At the end of July, almost 90 additional temporary workers arrived at Jones & Church Farms to help harvest tomatoes through October, says Jones Rogers. Though the 10 workers who had COVID-19 have recovered, she says she's scared that if more get the disease, there won't be enough housing to keep sick workers separate from others or enough healthy workers to harvest the crops. "Tomatoes don't wait until everyone is feeling good to be harvested," says Jones Rogers. (Courtesy npr.org)

Website interface for Southern News Group featuring a navigation bar, a 41st anniversary banner, a COVID-19 risk assessment infographic, and various news snippets.