

Beat: Technology

Government requests for Facebook user data jumps 36 percent

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USPA News - The number of government requests for Facebook to turn over user information rose by more than 35 percent during the first half of this year, the social networking website reported on Tuesday, adding that requests for local content restrictions had also increased. The California-based company said it received a total of 34,946 government requests for data during the first six months of this year, an increase of 36.5 percent when compared to the same period last year.

Most were from the United States, which submitted 15,433 requests during the first half of 2014, followed by India (4,559), Germany (2,537), France (2,249), and the United Kingdom (2,110). The number of Facebook accounts impacted by all requests combined also increased year-on-year. A total of 49,479 user accounts were referenced in the requests submitted between January 1 and June 30, compared to 37,954 impacted user accounts during the same period last year, representing a 30.3 percent increase. "Since our first report, we've seen an increase in government requests for data and for content restrictions," said Chris Sonderby, Facebook's deputy general counsel. "As we've said before, we scrutinize every government request we receive for legal sufficiency under our terms and the strict letter of the law, and push back hard when we find deficiencies or are served with overly broad requests." The figures released on Tuesday do not yet include U.S. national security requests as the U.S. government requires Facebook to delay the release of such data for six months, after which the company is allowed to release a number within ranges of 1,000. Facebook reported less than 3,000 such requests for the first half of 2013, impacting less than 8,000 accounts. Tuesday's figures for the first half of this year also showed that Facebook received 8,774 government requests to locally block content that violates local law, an increase of 19 percent when compared to the 7,371 requests during the second half of 2013. Figures for the first half of 2013 have not been released. Nearly all content-related requests this year so far have come from India, Pakistan, and Turkey. According to Facebook, the vast majority of government data requests seek basic subscriber information - such as names and IP addresses - in relation to criminal investigations. Content that violates the law in a specific country - such as denying the Holocaust, which is illegal in Germany - will only be blocked locally in that jurisdiction.

Article online:

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