

# Russia to develop cyberspace 'security' without 'total control'

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Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a Security Council meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow on October 1, 2014

President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday said Russia must increase its cybersecurity but pledged not to impose total control over the Internet, amid fears Moscow is mulling whether to limit access to the worldwide Web.

"Today we need to develop and carry out a number of extra measures to protect information. It is necessary to increase the security of Russian communications networks and [information resources](#)," Putin told his national security council.

He warned that "certain countries" dominated the Internet and were trying to use this "soft power" to achieve "not just economic but also military and political goals".

In the past the Russian strongman has said the US controls the Web.

But, in an apparent bid to quash fears that the Kremlin could cut Russia off from the rest of the worldwide Web, he pledged to ensure free access to the Internet.

Respected business daily Vedomosti said earlier this month that authorities were considering bringing in measures early next year to unplug Russia from the Web in emergency situations, such as major protests or military hostilities.

"I would like to stress, not only won't there be any unjustified or even total limits, we are not even considering them," Putin said.

The Russian leader said he did not want to "limit access to the Internet, place it under total control, bring it under the state, to limit the legal interests and opportunities of people, public organisations and businesses".

Russia's pledges to tighten security over the Internet have provoked widespread alarm in a country where social media and online news sites are crucial outlets for the political opposition.

The authorities have already introduced tough curbs on the cyberspace,

including a law requiring Internet giants such as Google, Facebook and Twitter to store all personal data of Russian users in the country.

Lawmakers have also passed a requirement for bloggers to register as media if they have more than 3,000 followers and a law that could see Russians imprisoned for up to five years for retweeting "offensive" information.

A government agency has been granted the powers to block blacklisted Internet sites for extremism without a court ruling.

Putin has previously called the Internet a "CIA project" and warned Russians against making any Google searches because, he said, all information "goes through servers that are in the (United) States, everything is monitored there".

There are some 70 million Internet users in Russia, around half of the population.

Earlier this year the founder of Russia's top social network VKontakte, Pavel Durov, fled the country after selling his share in the company under pressure from the security services.

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