

# Rednote the #1 download in app store as TikTok “refugees” join Chinese-owned app in protest of US government ban

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Rednote has gained millions of US users as TikTokers, outraged by the US government’s banning of the app, flock to the Chinese-owned TikTok-like app. The app had 3.4 million active daily users in the US as of Monday, a steep increase from the fewer than 700,000 a day earlier. Rednote is known as XiaoHongShu in China, meaning “Little Red Book,” a reference to the Stalinist former leader of China Mao Zedong’s book by the same name, and has 300 million users mostly based in China.

Rednote isn’t the Chinese version of TikTok. The domestic version is known as Douyin. Douyin preceded TikTok, with content on the platform previously restricted to China only until recently when the app was suddenly opened up to US users. While Douyin isn’t available in the app stores in America, making it difficult to quantify how many downloads there have been among US users, it is available for download on its website for iPhone and Android users.

The hundreds of thousands of US users who moved to Rednote made a very conscious protest against the anti-Chinese trade war policy of the whole political establishment, both Democratic and Republican, and all branches of government. The Supreme Court, Congress and the presidency have all agreed to ban the massively popular app, which is used by 170 million Americans.

The campaign to ban the app was made a priority by the Biden administration and the Democrats, with the ban one of the last acts of the administration. The Democrats carried out the ban on the grounds that the app was a “threat to national security,” that it would be used for propaganda purposes by the Chinese government and that the Chinese government would be stealing Americans’ data. The government has no

evidence for any of these claims. It even admitted during a Supreme Court hearing that it had no evidence that TikTok “engaged in covert content manipulation in this country,” one of the central claims to the government’s case put before the Supreme Court.

The real purpose of the ban, in addition to the trade war component, which will be covered later in this article, is to control the discourse among Americans within the country and to keep it under the strict oversight of government and corporate media censors as American imperialism forces through ever more unpopular policies. Within the aforementioned hearing, the government admitted it was worried about Americans “arguing” with other Americans. As a Pew Research Center study done in 2024 indicated, 39 percent of Americans regularly obtained news from TikTok. Much of the accounts on TikTok are organic, the product of users voting with their finger-swipes, instead of censorship and official partnerships.

As a USA Today article admitted that while “Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts scrambling to fill the void,” that “alternatives have yet to replicate TikTok’s reach and cultural impact.” The other aim no doubt is to cut off the American working class from its class brothers and sisters overseas. Given the aims, it is safe to say that the ban backfired. This is in no small part reflected by Trump’s intervention to delay the ban of the app, with the app returning to life after Trump’s declaration.

Moreover, those protesting the ban did so on the eve of the inauguration of a fascist thug to the highest office in the country, one who made vilifying China one of his administration’s top priorities during his last term and is known for his China-baiting. Trump’s was

the first presidential administration to put forward the TikTok ban. Trump's fascistic secretary of state, Marco Rubio, led the campaign to ban the app and was one of the first backers of the bill to ban it.

Significantly, downloads and usage of apps for learning Chinese have surged, with Chinese Rednote users making recommendations of apps to their American counterparts. Duolingo has seen a 216 percent increase in Chinese lessons. Rednote has also introduced in the past week a button to translate comments into English and other languages. This exposes the attempt by the corporate media and political establishment to pose the anti-China campaign as having a popular base. Rather, it is something introduced from above by the ruling elite and their representatives. If anything, this episode has exposed that the propaganda campaign of US imperialism has actually been fairly ineffective to date.

US-based users flocking to Rednote have exchanged humorous comments and videos declaring that they are personally delivering their user data to their "Chinese spy," with some even going so far as to say they would rather personally travel to China to furnish their personal information than use Meta. Chinese users have, for the most part, received their American counterparts warmly, joking about imposing a "cat tax" or "pet tax" from US users requesting they post pictures of their pets, and also jokingly demanding user data.

The Rednote episode shows the power of new technology to facilitate the breaking down of cultural barriers as well as the obsolete national borders. This also objectively demonstrates the possibility of a movement against the capitalist system on a world scale.

The move to Rednote has no doubt upset Meta and Google.

Meta, the parent company of Facebook, is infamous for spending millions lobbying for the ban in order to remove the competition from the US market. Meta hoped its short-form video service, Instagram Reels, would be able to fill the vacuum left by TikTok.

Google, the owner of YouTube, also spent millions seeking to capitalize with its own short-form video service, YouTube Shorts.

TikTok has enjoyed high growth in the past few years. While Facebook and YouTube have a higher

user count, these companies understand that every second spent on TikTok is lost advertisement and data mining revenue from their platforms. They also fear the powerful suggestion algorithm on TikTok, which is developed by ByteDance and is regarded as more advanced than either Instagram Reels or YouTube Shorts algorithms. There is a reason that Trump and his billionaire cronies are looking to buy the algorithm.



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