

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/321116/americans-remain-distrustful-mass-media.aspx>

The War in Iran

FCC chief threatens broadcasters as Trump criticizes coverage of Iran war

Brendan Carr warned media outlets to correct course or lose their licenses, as Trump escalated attacks on the media over Iran war coverage.

March 14, 2026



Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr testifies at a congressional hearing in January. (Jose Luis Magana/AP)

By [Scott Nover](#)

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr issued a stern warning to broadcasters Saturday, threatening to revoke government-issued licenses if they run what the federal agency deems “fake news.”

The warning, alongside which Carr included a screenshot of a post by President Donald Trump inveighing against legacy media coverage of the Iran war, was just the latest salvo from an official who since becoming FCC chairman at the outset of Trump’s second term has relished the role of media enforcer.

“Broadcasters that are running hoaxes and news distortions — also known as the fake news — have a chance now to correct course before their license renewals come up,” Carr wrote in a [post on X](#). “The law is clear. Broadcasters must operate in the public interest, and they will lose their licenses if they do not.”

Carr said “changing course” would be a savvy business decision for broadcasters — though he did not mention any by name — given “trust in legacy media has now fallen to an all time low of just 9% and are ratings disasters.” It’s unclear what trust metrics Carr is citing, but Gallup [found](#) in 2020 that 9 percent of Americans have “a great deal” of trust in mass media, though another 31 percent said they had “a fair amount” of trust. [Ask The Post AIDive deeper](#)

“When a political candidate is able to win a landslide election victory after in the face of hoaxes and distortions, there is something very wrong,” Carr said, presumably talking about President Donald Trump, who [received](#) 312 electoral votes and 49.9 percent of the national vote in the 2024 presidential election. “It means the public has lost faith and confidence in the media. And we can’t allow that to happen. Time for change!”

Carr’s post elicited backlash from Democratic politicians and press freedom advocates, who have long criticized the administration’s frequent insistence that adversarial or unflattering coverage is “fake.”

“If Trump doesn’t like your coverage of the war, his FCC will pull your broadcast license. That is flagrantly unconstitutional,” Gavin Newsom, the Democratic governor of California, [responded on X](#).

Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) said Carr's statement is a "clear directive to provide positive war coverage or else licenses may not be renewed."

Will Creeley, legal director at the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, called Carr's statement "dangerous" in a statement to The Washington Post.

"Brendan Carr's authoritarian warning — that networks risk their broadcasting licenses for Iran war reporting that the government doesn't like — is outrageous," Caley said. "When the government demands the press become a state mouthpiece under the threat of punishment, something has gone very wrong."

Carr's comments appeared to build on a separate post Saturday by Trump on Truth Social in which he condemned the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and other news outlets over their coverage of damage to U.S. military aircraft at a base in Saudi Arabia, calling them "Lowlife 'Papers' and Media" whose reporting amounted to wanting the United States "to lose the War." Trump did not mention any broadcasters. Spokespeople for the Times and the Journal did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The White House did not immediately comment on whether Trump included any broadcasters in his criticism of this line of coverage.

Scrutiny over the Iran war, which began with a U.S.-Israeli attack last month, has escalated the administration's pressure campaign, in which Carr has become a key participant, against legacy media — although the FCC only oversees radio and television stations such as local NBC affiliates or NPR member stations that license publicly owned airwaves to broadcast programming.

He has evoked condemnation from free speech advocates for pressuring Disney's ABC and its affiliate stations to temporarily take comedian Jimmy Kimmel off the air, expanding the equal-time rule to cover daytime and late-night talk shows, launching investigations into numerous media companies, and overseeing a lengthy merger review of Skydance's purchase of CBS parent company Paramount that included the network appointing a conservative ombudsman to review content.

A bipartisan group of FCC commissioners including chairs from both parties petitioned the agency in November to repeal its news distortion policy — a rarely used instrument that has been at the heart of Carr's media campaign — arguing that even without enforcement action, "the specter of government interference alone chills broadcasters' speech." At the time, Carr said the petition was "quite rich" coming from people who, he said, censored conservatives. A spokesman for Carr did not immediately respond to a question about whether Carr's remarks were targeted at specific broadcasters.

Trump spent much of Friday and Saturday attacking news organizations as well. He shared an infographic on Truth Social titled "President Trump Is Reshaping the Media," cataloguing the departures of prominent journalists and TV anchors under a section labeled "Gone," which also includes "massive layoffs" at The Post.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth complained Friday about what he called "fake news from CNN," over a report indicating that the administration underestimated the war's impact on the Strait of Hormuz. He also said the network would improve once Skydance Paramount chief David Ellison — whose pending purchase of Warner Bros. Discovery includes CNN and requires Trump administration approval — takes it over. Ask The Post AIDive deeper CNN Chairman and CEO Mark Thompson pushed back in a statement Friday.

"We stand by our journalism," Thompson said. "Politicians have an obvious motive for claiming that journalism which raises questions about their decisions is false. At CNN our only interest is in telling the truth to our audiences in the U.S. and around the world and no amount of political threats or insults is going to change that."

Aux Etats-Unis, les médias menacés de perdre leur licence s'ils diffusent des informations jugées « déformées » sur la guerre au Moyen-Orient

L'avertissement formulé par le principal régulateur de l'audiovisuel américain intervient après que Donald Trump a qualifié de fausses informations des publications critiques à l'égard de son administration.

Le Monde avec AFP , 15 mars 2026

La guerre au Moyen-Orient offre un nouvel épisode de tensions entre Donald Trump et certains médias accusés par le président américain de diffuser des fake news.

Brendan Carr, le président – nommé par le dirigeant républicain – de la Commission fédérale des communications (FCC), qui supervise les médias américains de la radio, de la télévision et d'Internet, a affirmé, samedi 14 mars, que les médias « *diffusant des canulars et des informations déformées* » risquaient de perdre leur droit d'émettre sur les ondes

aux Etats-Unis. « *La loi est claire. Les diffuseurs doivent agir dans l'intérêt public, et ils perdront leur licence s'ils ne le font pas* », a déclaré M. Carr dans un message publié sur X.

Le régulateur ne pointe aucun média en particulier, mais il fait référence à un message publié par Donald Trump sur sa plateforme Truth Social, dans lequel le président dénonçait « *un titre intentionnellement trompeur des Fake News Médias* » concernant cinq avions ravitailleurs touchés par des frappes iraniennes en Arabie saoudite.

Depuis son premier mandat, le président américain qualifie régulièrement les publications négatives de « *fake news* » et a pris des mesures pour restreindre les accès de la presse depuis son retour au pouvoir.

La Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), organisation américaine de défense de la liberté d'expression, a qualifié l'avertissement « *autoritaire* » de M. Carr de « *scandaleux* ». « *Lorsque le gouvernement exige que la presse devienne le porte-parole de l'Etat sous la menace de sanctions, c'est que quelque chose ne va vraiment pas* », a-t-elle déclaré, sur X, en réponse au message de Brendan Carr.

La chaîne CNN visée

Depuis qu'Israël et les Etats-Unis ont lancé leurs premières frappes contre l'Iran le 28 février, Donald Trump et le secrétaire à la défense, Pete Hegseth, ont régulièrement brocardé les articles critiques à cette offensive militaire. Vendredi, le Pentagone et la Maison Blanche ont tous deux interpellé la chaîne CNN au sujet de sa couverture de la crise iranienne, après la diffusion d'un reportage suggérant que Washington avait sous-estimé la capacité de l'Iran à perturber le trafic pétrolier dans le détroit d'Ormuz.

« *Cet article est à 100 % une FAKE NEWS* », a affirmé la porte-parole de la Maison Blanche, Karoline Leavitt, dans un message sur X, utilisant la rhétorique du président.

L'année dernière, M. Carr avait menacé de retirer la licence de diffusion de la chaîne ABC à la suite de commentaires formulés par l'animateur Jimmy Kimmel au sujet de l'assassinat du militant d'extrême droite Charlie Kirk. ABC avait brièvement retiré l'émission de Kimmel de l'antenne, ce qui avait suscité un tollé avant que l'émission revienne à l'antenne.

Major media outlets, including Hegseth's former employer Fox News, decline to sign new Pentagon reporting rules

The former employer of the Secretary of Defense joined CNN, ABC and NBC in refusing to sign the agreement.

Politico, By [Chevanne M. Daniels](#) 10/14/2025

Fox News, which previously employed Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, joined most major news organizations on Tuesday in refusing to agree to new rules around reporting at the Pentagon.

The company signed a joint statement with ABC News, CBS News, CNN and NBC News saying the new requirements “would restrict journalists’ ability to keep the nation and the world informed of important national security issues.”

“The policy is without precedent and threatens core journalistic protections,” the organizations said.

The move is a blow to Hegseth, a former host of “Fox & Friends Weekend.” Hegseth [announced the new rules last month](#), threatening journalists’ access to the Pentagon if they did not sign on to rules that would punish them for either soliciting or publishing information that the Pentagon did not want released.

An initial memo to reporters read that “information must be approved for public release by an appropriate authorizing official before it is released, even if it is unclassified.” Reporters that did not sign on to the agreement would not be issued press passes.

News organizations have until Tuesday to agree to the new rules, but so far only — the Trump-friendly One America News Network — has said publicly that it has done so.

POLITICO has also declined to agree to the Pentagon’s new rules. [In a statement](#), the company said the new policy “infringes on First Amendment protections and limits the ability to produce rigorous and transparent reporting.”

The company added that POLITICO will continue to cover the military “fairly and independently.”

The new rules follow multiple controversial moves by the Department. Earlier this year, the Department [took away workspaces](#) from several media organizations — including POLITICO, The Washington Post and The New York Times.

President Donald Trump told reporters Tuesday that Hegseth “finds the press to be very disruptive in terms of world peace, and maybe security for our nation.”

“The press is very dishonest,” Trump added.

Hegseth has been largely dismissive of [media outlets’ refusals](#). He has responded to statements from the Washington Post, The New York Times and The Atlantic — all of which also refused to agree to the new rules — with the handwaving emoji.

Hegseth said on Tuesday that the new rules are “commonsense.”

“It used to be, Mr. President, the press could go pretty much anywhere in the Pentagon, the most classified area in the world,” Hegseth said. “Also, if they sign onto the credentialing, they’re not going to try to get soldiers to break the law by giving them classified information. So it’s commonsense stuff, Mr. President, we’re trying to make sure national security is respected and we’re proud of the policy.”

[Politics](#)

Pentagon blocks photographers from Hegseth’s briefings on the Iran war

Associated Press - By [DAVID BAUDER](#), March 11, 2026

NEW YORK (AP) — The Pentagon has not permitted photographers to cover Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth’s last two briefings on [the war in Iran](#), and hasn’t explained the change in longstanding policy.

A Pentagon spokesman, Joel Valdez, declined to comment for this story.

The Defense Department under Hegseth has had a contentious relationship with the news media assigned to cover him. Most mainstream news organizations have [left their desks](#) at the Pentagon rather than accept new Trump administration rules that restrict their movements and who they can talk to.

They’ve been replaced at the Pentagon by a [newly constituted press corps](#) that agreed to the rules and to a large extent work for outlets that are supportive of President Donald Trump.

The Pentagon has been giving passes to reporters who vacated their desks at the Pentagon in order to attend Hegseth’s briefings on the war. Although Hegseth infrequently recognizes those legacy news reporters at the briefings, he did call on one of them, Eric Schmitt of The New York Times, on Tuesday.

The Times has sued the Trump administration to overturn Hegseth’s rules, and a hearing was held [on that case](#) before U.S. District Judge Paul Friedman last week.

“As The Times has long said, there is a clear importance and public service to allowing journalists to report fully on the U.S. military,” said Charles Stadtlander, spokesman for the newspaper. “This includes photojournalists, who deserve access and credentialing to attend Pentagon briefings.”

The Associated Press had no immediate comment on the blocking of its photographers. Hegseth is still allowing video cameras at his briefings.

The Times’ war coverage has drawn the attention of White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt. On Tuesday, she said the administration was not going to be “harassed” by The Times about an investigation into the bombing of a girls’ school in Iran. An estimated 175 people were killed, including many school children.

Leavitt said Trump would accept the conclusion of the Defense Department’s investigation into who was responsible for the bombing. “We’re not going to be harassed by The New York Times, who’ve been putting out a lot of articles on this making claims that have just not been verified by the Department of War, to quickly wrap up this investigation because The New York Times is calling on us to do so,” she said.

The newspaper reported on Wednesday, citing sources who spoke on condition of anonymity, that the preliminary finding of the administration has concluded that the United States was responsible for the bombing. The military believes outdated information was relied upon in setting a target for the Tomahawk missile used in the attack, the report said.



Analysis

‘Right out of central casting’ Pete Hegseth just told us what matters most about the Iran War: His press clippings

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth seems far more obsessed with his own press coverage than his actual job, [Andrew Feinberg](#) writes

The Independent, Friday 13 March

Since he was confirmed by the Senate five days into President [Donald Trump](#)’s second term, Secretary of Defense [Pete Hegseth](#) has supposedly overseen a trillion-dollar budget with a workforce of nearly 3 million military and civilian personnel.

Since Feb. 28, he’s supposedly been running the day-to-day operations of one of the largest air campaigns in recent history as the U.S. and Israel have pounded [Iran](#)’s military infrastructure to a pulp while touching off a global energy crisis with at least 13 American service members killed, including the crew of a KC-135 tanker aircraft.

But as the ex-Fox News host — a former Army National Guard Major who caught President Donald Trump’s attention by advocating for pardons for accused war criminals during his first term — made a rare appearance in the [Pentagon](#)’s briefing room on Friday, it was not the Supreme Leader (new or old one) that had Hegseth nearly breathless at the podium.

No, it was an enemy far more insidious that revealed itself to the self-titled Secretary of War — the free press.

Sgt. Rock-in-a-suit hadn’t even finished his first sentence when he started in with a gratuitous dig at his former colleagues in the “media,” urging the “fake news” to “actually admit” that the U.S. was “decimating the radical Iranian regime’s military in a way the world has never seen before.”

‘Here’s a real headline for you, for an actual patriotic press,’ Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth scolded reporters at an Iran War briefing Friday (*Getty*)

Setting aside the obvious fact that Hegseth — a graduate of Harvard and Princeton — is seemingly unaware that “decimating” Iran’s military would leave 90 percent of it

functioning, the extraneous attack on press coverage was just the opening salvo.

After a series of boasts about the U.S. progress in destroying Iran’s offensive capabilities (plus comparing the country’s leadership to “rats” who are “cowering” in underground facilities) and a declaration that America’s military would give “no quarter” — something that would constitute a war crime — Hegseth turned his attention to an even more pressing matter: Television news graphics.

The former weekend morning show host purported to offer “a few suggestions” to the assembled reporters after grouching about “banners” and “headlines” seen by Americans that aren’t reflective of his own worldview.

Instead of “Mideast war intensifies,” Hegseth demanded an alternative headline: “Iran increasingly desperate.”

He also took issue with another “fake headline” which suggested the war is “widening” after Iran threatened to target shipping in the Strait of Hormuz — which, to the consternation of “fake news” copy editors everywhere, he insisted on repeatedly calling the *Straits* of Hormuz — and Israel began attacking targets in Lebanon with abandon.

“Here’s a real headline for you, for an actual patriotic press. How about, ‘Iran shrinking, going underground,’” Hegseth (by then quite ramped up about it), told the reporters gathered in a Pentagon briefing room.

And on top of that, he went after CNN — the only major U.S. network to have had a correspondent inside Iran since the start of the war — for reporting that Trump administration officials told Congress they had underestimated the extent to which Iran would seek to retaliate against airstrikes by cutting off tanker traffic

through the strait, a transit point for 20 percent of the world's oil supply.



[open image in gallery](#)

The ex-Fox News host spent the top of his briefing venting about his displeasure with television news graphics on the war in Iran (*US Department of War*)

He called the scoop “patently ridiculous” and suggested that Iran “always” holds the strait “hostage.”

“It’s a fundamentally unserious report. The sooner David Ellison takes over that network, the better,” he said, referring to the MAGA-friendly billionaire Paramount chief who recently bought CNN’s parent company after acquiring CBS earlier last year.

The White House also weighed in later against the report with a release accusing the network of “lying to undermine Operation Epic Fury’s crushing success.” In response, a spokesperson for the network told *The Independent*: “We stand by our reporting.”

But it’s not as if the multimillionaire ex-talking head’s tirades against the industry that made him both extremely wealthy and a nationally-recognized figure are anything new.

After spending years on Fox News railing against “mainstream media” despite working at the highest-rated cable network in the country, Trump rewarded him with the Pentagon in large part because of his long history of attacking his colleagues in the press corps — and because of what Trump considers his “central casting” appearance: White, male, buff and well-coiffed.

Since his confirmation, Hegseth’s tenure as the least-experienced defense secretary in U.S. history has been defined in part by his disdain for the free and independent press corps that had walked the Pentagon’s halls since the labyrinthine building was completed during World War II. Early on, his hand-picked press aides tossed out major legitimate news organizations from the workspace they’d reported from along the Pentagon’s “correspondents’ corridor” for decades and replaced them with mostly right-wing outlets — Lindell TV??!! — that lacked the resources or will to consistently cover his department, whether in a sycophantic manner or not.

Obsessed with his own image and seeing leaks everywhere, Hegseth (who more and more each day is

coming to resemble [Colin Jost’s not-great caricature](#) of him on *SNL*) then ordered more restrictions by limiting the press to the building’s cafeteria and their work area, banning them even from places where tourists can freely go in the world’s second-largest office building.

The point of the new rules was clear — to limit impromptu interactions between reporters and potential sources that might lead to unflattering information making its way to journalists. In other words, news reporting.

It didn’t work. Stories still ran that presented him — or the president — in a negative, or at least critical, light. So Hegseth cracked down even more last fall by effectively banning legitimate news operations from the Pentagon unless their reporters signed a pledge not to report anything that hadn’t been pre-cleared by the Pentagon.

Even his own former employer, Fox News, said “no thanks” to such a dog’s breakfast of a policy. They, along with all but a handful of small operators or sycophants, walked out of the Pentagon after surrendering their credentials in September.

And while Hegseth and his press staff have permitted some of those same legitimate organizations back in for limited briefings such as the one held on Friday, he’s consistently shown his contempt for them by forcing their representatives — including his own former Fox colleague, a widely-respected Pentagon veteran named Jennifer Griffin — to sit in the back of the room while he fields softballs from a who’s who of clownish brown-nosers from explicitly pro-Trump “news” outlets.

Occasionally, one of those partisan commentators does ask a good question, such as when Lindell TV’s Cara Castronuova used a similar briefing on Tuesday to ask about specific steps the Pentagon is taking to minimize civilian casualties in Iran — a hot topic after a U.S. missile accidentally struck a girls’ school on the first day of the air campaign.

But those exceptions are just that, exceptions. Hegseth’s reliance on partisan mouthpieces and his disdain for legitimate reporting also extend beyond television and the written word to visual journalists. Just this week, *The Washington Post* scooped that he’d ordered award-winning still photographers out of his briefings after he found their photographs of him to be “unflattering.”

Between obsessing over whether news photographs make him look sufficiently handsome and arguing about television chyrons (the captions that occupy the lower third of news broadcasts), it leaves one to wonder when the Defense Secretary has time to do honest-to-God Defense Secretary stuff.

And with Iran choking off oil and risking a global economic disaster by doing so, he might do well to turn off the TV and get back to work.

[Analysis](#)

Has the pro-Maga media turned on the Pentagon over Iran?

[Jeremy Barr](#) in Washington

New pro-Trump press corps has surprised some skeptics with tough questions, though sycophancy fears remain

The Guardian, Fri 13 Mar 2026

The question, asked during a 4 March press briefing with [Pete Hegseth](#), the secretary of defense, and Gen Dan Caine, was a good one: if the US had “obliterated” [Iran](#)’s nuclear facilities during an operation last June, “what was the intelligence that suggested that somehow they became a threat once again that required us to get involved with Operation Epic Fury?”

It was asked by Heather Mullins, who works for LindellTV, the television network founded by Mike Lindell, the pillow entrepreneur, Trump cheerleader and 2020 election denier.

On Tuesday, a reporter from the Gateway Pundit, an outlet that “regularly peddles falsehoods and conspiracy theories”, as [NPR put it in 2024](#), asked about [reports](#) that the US is unhappy with its chief ally in the operation against Iran, Israel.

“Whether this reporting’s true or not, what’s your message to Americans, those who supported the president and those who aren’t really in favor of this war and who worry that [Israel](#) might be taking advantage of the US’s backing?” asked Jordan Conradson.

After the heavy hitters of the [Pentagon press corps](#) walked out in October over new restrictions on access and reporting, many worried how the Donald Trump-friendly media who took their place would fill the void – particularly if, say, a war started.

Major fears remain, stoked by questions bordering on sycophancy, but, so far, some longtime skeptics of the pro-Maga press corps say they are doing better than expected at questioning Hegseth and the generals who have been brought out on four occasions to give briefings and take questions from a large group of assembled reporters.

“I would say the questions have, with a few exceptions, all been fair, valid, and similar to questions I’ve had in my own notebook,” said one longtime Pentagon correspondent who has attended all four briefings. “Now, they’re certainly not being asked with the same intensity or pointedness as I or my colleagues would use, but I think that takes little away from their editorial value.”

Or, as Mark Feldstein, a professor of broadcast journalism at the University of Maryland, put it: “Even Pete Hegseth’s hand-picked rightwing media lackeys are starting to raise some of the same sort of obvious questions about the risk of Iran becoming a quagmire that mainstream journalists have been posing, a departure from these conservatives’ more traditional role of just mindlessly cheerleading all of the administration’s actions.”

In an interview, Barbara Starr, a former Pentagon correspondent for CNN, also noted the performance of some of the [new contingent](#) of mostly Maga-aligned media personalities, though she said that doesn’t mean traditional journalists should be excluded.

“It’s interesting,” she said, “some of the ‘new media’, I will say some of them have asked very reasonable, good questions. Some of them are pure propaganda, which is why I come back to my personal professional belief: everyone should be included.”

A second longtime Pentagon reporter, who also attended an [Iran](#) briefing, was less impressed with the questioning from right-leaning outlets, calling it “really below par” and “not really challenging”.

During the 4 March briefing, a correspondent asked about a statement made by Hakeem Jeffries, the House minority leader, who said in an appearance on CNN that the American people don’t want another “endless war in the Middle East that is going to end in failure”.

So, the reporter asked Hegseth, “what kind of message does that send to our enemies and what does it do to the motivation of our troops?” It was a layup for Hegseth, a former Fox News personality who made his name lambasting Democrats and the mainstream media. “Well, I’ve been through that movie before with the Democrats rooting against the country,” the secretary responded.

During Hegseth’s first post-attack briefing, on 2 March, the first question was given to Alexandra Ingersoll of the far-right One America News Network, who asked what the US’ “exit strategy” will be and “when it will be deployed”.

The briefing closed, however, with a much softer question to Hegseth, asking him what specific prayer he was saying for US troops in the field. The responses to the question on social media weren't kind.

In a change, the Pentagon has allowed many of the legacy reporters who gave up their press passes last fall to attend the Iran-focused briefings, though they have mostly been relegated to the back of the room. The Pentagon has reportedly limited briefing room access for news photographers because of unflattering photos of Hegseth, though it claims it is doing so "to use space in the Pentagon Briefing Room effectively".

While most of the questions have gone to journalists for right-leaning outlets, who now occupy the prime seats in the briefing room, Hegseth has also called on reporters from the BBC and the New York Times. (He called on BBC correspondent Tom Bateman on 4 March by saying "tie, right there.")

Despite Hegseth's longstanding beef with the Times, he did not lash out when asked by national security correspondent Eric Schmitt on Tuesday about the timeline for the war and about any "adaptations" the Iranian military has made in response to US tactics. (The Pentagon is also currently enmeshed in a lawsuit filed by the Times in response to the press pass policy change.)

"I appreciate the question," Hegseth began. "Where we are is in a very strong place, giving the president of the United States maximum options."

Major takeovers- CNN CBS TIKTOK- ELLISON

Who bought TikTok? What to know about a Florida billionaire, Oracle

TikTok secures US future with Trump-backed ownership deal

[Lianna Norman](#) , [C. A. Bridges](#) USA TODAY NETWORK - Florida

If you are a TikTok user, you're likely aware that the ownership of the formerly Chinese-owned app was under review for potential national security risks from late 2019 through 2025, spanning multiple presidencies and numerous pieces of legislation.

Now, the popular social media platform has officially changed hands to become majority-owned by a group of U.S.-backed investors and companies, like Texas-based tech giant Oracle. TikTok's former majority owner, Chinese tech company ByteDance, still owns a minority stake in the app (around 20%).

In the days following the app's transition to new ownership on Jan. 22, some content creators, celebrities, and everyday TikTok users are deleting the app altogether, citing content censorship under the new terms of service agreement users must accept to continue using it.

Here's which companies and investors own TikTok, who owns Oracle, and what to know about the app's new terms and conditions.

Who is TikTok owned by now?

TikTok avoids a U.S. ban as Trump-backed investors take majority control in a landmark deal.

The new TikTok ownership deal was officially reached on Thursday, Jan. 22. Cloud computing giant Oracle, private equity group Silver Lake and Abu Dhabi-based MGX, now hold an 80.1% stake in the app, while Beijing-based ByteDance retains 19.9%.

President Donald Trump issued the first TikTok ban through an executive order in 2020, toward the end of his first term. That first ban gave ByteDance a deadline to sell to a U.S. company. The ban coincidentally came just a month after TikTokkers organized a campaign through the app to sign up for attendance at his rallies, causing Trump to brag about the number of expected attendees, only to be left facing empty seats.

Oracle nearly succeeded in acquiring TikTok's U.S. operations then, in a partnership with Walmart. But ByteDance filed a request for a preliminary injunction to prevent the app from being banned, and the ban never went into effect.

Biden later revoked the order and ordered the secretary of commerce to investigate the app. In 2022, Biden signed a bill prohibiting the app on government devices. On day one of his second term, Trump issued an executive order to halt enforcement of Biden's ban and continued to approve delays throughout 2025 as deals were discussed.

The final deal was for a new group, TikTok USDS Joint Venture LLC, to secure U.S. user data, apps, and the algorithm through data privacy and cybersecurity measures, the company said. This is the deal that gave Oracle, Silver Lake, and MGX an 80.1% stake in the app.

Oracle founder and Florida-landowner Larry Ellison also owns nearly 50% of his son David's media conglomerate Paramount Skydance, Forbes said, which operates the CBS broadcast television network, Paramount Pictures, and the Nickelodeon cable channel.

The media conglomerate is currently attempting a takeover of Warner Bros. Discovery. If the sale went through, the company with close ties to Trump would control Warner Bros., HBO Max, DC Comics, The Discovery Channel, and CNN, among other media entities. So far, Warner Bros. Discovery has rejected Paramount's attempts.

TikTok users deleting the app: Here's why actress, comedian Megan Stalter is deleting her TikTok account

What is Oracle? Who owns Oracle?

Oracle is an Austin, Texas-based tech company known for its database software and cloud computing services. Major companies that are Oracle customers include J.P. Morgan, IBM, eBay, LinkedIn, Airbnb, and more.

Now one of the largest software and hardware companies in the world, Oracle was founded in 1977 in Santa Clara, California, by Larry Ellison, Bob Miner, and Ed Oates. Oates retired from Oracle in 1996, and Miner died in 1994 after battling mesothelioma.

According to Oracle's website, Ellison is the executive chairman of Oracle Corp. and the company's chief technology officer. He served as CEO until 2014.

According to Forbes, Ellison is the world's sixth-richest person as of Jan. 28, 2026, with a net worth of \$225.8 billion, and is a known supporter of President Trump. Ellison owns \$450 million in real estate in Florida alone, according to Realtor.

What are the new terms and conditions for TikTok?

TikTok's terms of service agreement was updated when the app's ownership changed on Jan. 22.

Many content creators and celebrities have taken to the app and other social media platforms, claiming that the new terms are censoring content that is critical or disparaging of the Trump Administration's immigration actions.

Among the many voices calling on users to delete TikTok, award-winning actress and comedian Megan Stalter, 35, took to Instagram to echo what many users were reporting about their Trump-critical content.

"Today I will be downloading my videos and deleting my TikTok page," Stalter wrote in a Jan. 25 Instagram post. "TT is under new ownership and we are being completely censored and monitored. I'm unable to upload anything about (ICE) even after I tried to trick the page by making it look like a comedy video."

Posts like Stalter's being suppressed or failing to post could have also been due to an outage. More than 30,000 TikTok users reported frustrations with the app on Sunday, Jan. 24. More than 60% reported problems with the app, about 20% complained about their feed or timeline, and 18% reported a total outage, according to Downtetector.

The issue seemed to be resolved by early morning on Monday, Jan. 25. But by 7 a.m. thousands more users were still running into problems, with comments about profile views not working, new posts not showing up, posts registering zero comments, delayed comments, and more.

According to the current TikTok terms of service agreement, the new ownership group reserves the right to ban, restrict, or suspend a user's account or access to part or all of the platform if they're in violation of the app's policies or community guidelines.

"We operate the Platform for you and others, and we may work with our affiliates, service providers, and business partners. We customize parts of your experience on the Platform to make it more relevant and enjoyable for you," TikTok's terms of service agreement says.

"We may take steps to identify and take action against content that may violate our Terms, Community Guidelines, and other conditions or policies, to protect you and others in our community."

TikTok's community guidelines say that "discussions about social and political issues" are allowed, but that the content has to be considered "respectful." You can find TikTok's community guidelines and terms of service agreement on its legal page.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2026/03/05/media/cnn-david-ellison-paramount-wbd-merger>

The Decline of Local Newspapers – News Deserts

Why the Dire State of Local News Matters – And Some Reasons for Hope

Local news fosters connection – and staves off corruption.

By Olivier Knox, *U.S. News and World Report*, Dec. 4, 2025



David Grunfeld|Tribune News Service|Getty Images

We're big fans of local and regional news here at Decision Points, which is why we frequently run roundups of stories about politics that may not have made national headlines.

Why does local news matter? Because it tends to affect people's lives in a way that terminally inside-the-Beltway pieces about "who won the shutdown" do not. And because national policy problems – and solutions – often bubble up from local issues.

To more fully capture the importance of local journalism, we interviewed Alex Seitz-Wald, who made the transition from hopscotching around the country as a national politics reporter for NBC News to becoming the deputy editor of The Midcoast Villager in Camden, Maine, a town with a population of just over 5,000.

Our exchange has been lightly edited for length and clarity.

Why should people care about the fate of local news?

It's the best way to find out what's happening in your community, where things will have a far more direct impact on your life than most decisions coming out of Washington. Local news helps knit communities together, fostering local identity and action. And it makes your community a more delightful place to live by highlighting interesting people and things to do. When local news disappears, whole chunks of civic life vanish and, it's been proven, public corruption goes up.

There's still a huge appetite for local information – just look at any local Facebook group or neighborhood listserv – there's just fewer sources that are fact-based, neutral, trusted, fair and accountable. And if we only get our news from national outlets, it's easier to judge our neighbors by the bumper stickers on their car or the yard signs on their lawn rather than our shared daily lived experiences.

What is the current state of local news? Where is it trending?

The short answer is: bleak. More than two newspapers are closing every week in the U.S., and more than 70% of local reporting jobs have been eliminated since the early 2000s. The economics have just completely collapsed. Advertising, which always supported news, has cratered – Google and Meta now capture something like two-thirds of advertising spending. Subscriptions alone can't support full newsrooms, especially in smaller markets, since there's a ceiling on your number of potential subscribers. And we're competing for readers' attention and \$10 a month against not only the myriad news outlets that are now available, but streaming platforms, Substackers, podcasters, Patreon creators, etc. The old model isn't coming back.

The longer answer, though, is more interesting and more hopeful. We're in this period of unbelievable experimentation and innovation, more so than in national news I think. They take a million different shapes and sizes – newsletters, podcasts, YouTubers, SMS-based news, bulk mail, a print zine – and a lot of them don't look like traditional newsrooms.

They're all different because they're of their specific place and meeting their specific communities. I was at a conference in Salt Lake City recently with a bunch of these folks and left pretty optimistic that local news isn't going away, it's just going to look very different. There's a tendency among professional journalists to gatekeep and dismiss some of the folks as "influencers," vapid and for sale. But there are also local creators delivering real, important and useful information.

You have a cafe – how does that fit into your business model?

We opened the Villager Cafe this spring on the ground floor of the building that houses our newsroom. It's an extension of the newsroom: We use it for meetings and source building and as a way to have our ear on the town coffee talk. It's also a brand new source of revenue that is not dependent on advertising or subscriptions. We use it for live events, which are just another way of bringing our journalism to the community, as well as another revenue stream.

Most of all, it's our public face. It shows that we're here, we're responsive, we're accountable, we're transparent, we're real people. It's where readers can come in to ask questions, challenge us, and pitch ideas. Every Friday, I hold open office hours to talk through the week's edition with anyone who comes. Sometimes those sessions get a bit tense, but they are always (so far at least) constructive because we're literally eye-to-eye. I think projecting accessibility and transparency is crucial in a time when trust in media is low.

Could AI replace local reporters – in a good way?

No. Full stop. AI can absolutely help local reporters do our jobs better, faster and easier – so that we can devote more time to actual reporting.

But AI cannot do the most fundamental job of any reporter: Talking to humans. It can't bring new information into the world, it can only help you access what is already out there. It can't call a source to get a scoop or a fresh quote, it can't notice a select board member whispering something to a colleague in the middle of a tense meeting, it can't take a photograph of the high school football game, it can't ride out to a house fire with firefighters, it can't bump into someone in the dairy aisle of the supermarket and get a story idea. I could keep going.

And more importantly, it can't be a member of the community. People trust us in part because they know us. They see us around town or in our cafe. We are present and accountable. AI can never do that.

You had a career covering national politics before making this big move. How is covering local news similar or different?

I spent 15 years covering politics in DC, the last 10 of which were at NBC News. I loved covering campaigns and traveled all over the country, learned so much and met so many amazing people. But I would be one of dozens of reporters at a campaign event, each of us trying to find some marginally novel or different thing to say from the person furiously typing next to us. If I didn't go to that event, nothing would really change. In local news, we're usually the only reporter in the room. We cover stories that no one else will and leave a record for history of it.

You can't hide behind the byline in a small town. My daughter is in kindergarten with every other kindergartener in town because there's only one class per grade. We're members of the communities we cover. We go to the same grocery stores, our kids go to the same schools, our taxes go up when our readers' do, our power goes out when theirs does. And in an era when people tend not to trust journalists, we can make a personal connection with readers, which feels like a superpower national reporters can never have.

The Media in the Age of A.I.

AI-generated Iran images are widespread. How do we know what to believe?

[Margaret Sullivan](#)



Fake pictures look authentic – and authentic ones get mistaken for fake. Here are three rules for navigating the war coverage

The Guardian, Fri 13 Mar 2026

The videos look authentic – and they are spreading like wildfire on social media. One, for example, shows Iranian missiles exploding upon the airport in Tel Aviv, Israel. Another shows US soldiers being held at gunpoint by Iranian military.

They aren't real but – often made with the help of cutting-edge AI – they are wildly misleading. They may get debunked, but somehow that doesn't make a dent.

“New fakes are popping up faster than they can be swatted down,” as CNN's fact-checking reporter Daniel Dale [put it](#), detailing the fakes mentioned above – just two among so many.

Meanwhile, legitimate photographs and images, even from reliable sources of news, can get branded as false or suspicious. In some cases, that's a way to instill doubt and cause people to take the grim reality of war less seriously and to think of death and destruction as just one more video game.

The New York Times found itself forced to speak up this week after an organization charged online that a news image – depicting a large crowd of people in Tehran – showed “signs of digital manipulation” that suggested “copy-paste duplication”.

Not so, said a [Times statement posted online](#).

“This is a genuine image, taken by a journalist in Iran on Monday, March 9, 2026,” it began, saying that the analysis put out by the Empirical Research and Forecasting Institute is “fundamentally flawed” and that it is “dishonestly based on a re-posted version of the originally published image”.

It went on to state a larger case, that the Times “does not use A.I. to generate or manipulate images to represent real events; we rely on the work of human beings to bear witness, gather the facts, and help readers better understand the world”.

Those who had raised the questions replied by saying that they weren't claiming fabrication, but merely making the point that authoritarian regimes have incentives to manipulate images and that news outlets must rigorously verify.

Legitimate news organizations do just that, and sometimes are criticized for taking too long to come to conclusions as they do their verifications.

What are responsible news consumers (also known as citizens) to do, especially when they are hungry to understand what's happening in a high-stakes war?

Resist the temptation to take ‘a slice of truth’ as representing a larger whole or total reality

It all comes down to exercising critical thinking and slowing down, said David Clinch, a media consultant who was a founding partner in Storyful, a pioneer in forensic verification.

In an interview, he offered me three ideas to keep in mind.

First: “Don't trust anyone online, including yourself.” We all come with preconceived ideas, he notes, and sharing something we *want* to be true, without checking, can be dangerous and add to the problem.

Second, find and trust true experts. There are people at news organizations whose jobs and expertise revolve around determining what's real and what isn't. He gives as one example the BBC's Shayan Sardarizadeh, who posts social-media threads pointing out fabrications, and explaining the process of figuring that out.

Just days ago, Sardarizadeh debunked a video – which had been viewed more than a million times – that appeared to show a strike targeting a tower in Tel Aviv. [He was blunt](#): “The clip is AI-generated. The blast looks fake, and no such incident has been documented in Tel Aviv.”

Clinch adds, however, that it’s important not to rely on pseudo-experts; he mentions Grok – the AI chatbot on X. In other words, not all supposed experts or fact-checkers are created equal.

Third, resist the temptation to take “a slice of truth” as representing a larger whole or total reality. Even if an image or video is verified and accurate, it probably doesn’t tell the whole story or the only story. Look for context; read about what’s happening. And again, curb your impulses; slow down before sharing.

I asked Clinch if it is reasonable for normal people to be responsible for doing this kind of digging.

He replied that it’s now an unfortunate fact of life for those who want to be well-informed and not become part of the ugly cycle of online misinformation and disinformation.

“For responsible citizens, these things are both unfair and necessary,” Clinch said.

Critical thinking, amid all the fakery and false charges, has become increasingly important. And the chaos of war raises the stakes even higher.

So, trust nothing at first blush, find credible experts and always consider the larger context.

And maybe most of all, when it comes to sharing images online, either slow down or become part of the problem.

- Margaret Sullivan is a Guardian US columnist writing on media, politics and culture

How Trump’s Use of AI Videos Is Changing His Political Playbook

[ADD TIME ON GOOGLE](#)

by [Rebecca Schneid](#) and [Andrew R. Chow](#)

TIME, Oct 21, 2025



AI generated images of President Donald Trump shared on X via the official [@WhiteHouse](#) channel depict the President as a Jedi and the Pope. [@WhiteHouse / X](#)

President Donald Trump is turning artificial intelligence into one of his most potent political tools, using it to amplify his message and sharpen his online persona in ways experts say are proving strikingly effective.

Over the weekend, he [posted](#) a highly produced AI-generated video on Truth Social depicting himself wearing a crown, piloting a fighter jet labeled “King Trump,” and dropping what appeared to be excrement on protesters below – a likely reference to the nationwide [“No Kings”](#) rallies that drew millions of demonstrators.

The post was not an isolated stunt. It reflects a deliberate evolution in Trump’s digital strategy, experts argue – one that fuses AI-generated spectacle with the combative, meme-driven style that has defined his political communication for nearly a decade.

At a press conference Monday, Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson defended the video. “You can argue he’s probably the most effective person who’s ever used social media for that,” he said. “He is using satire to make a point. He is not calling for the murder of his political opponents.”

Trump dismissed the protests, telling reporters Sunday, “I’m not a king. I work my ass off to make our country great. That’s all it is.”

AI as a political weapon

Trump’s reliance on AI-generated content has become a defining feature of his digital presence. In recent months, he has circulated several AI-created images and videos – depicting himself as a [pope](#), a [warrior](#), winning the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) – to reinforce his political persona and mock his critics. Last month, he posted an AI video of House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries in a fake mustache and sombrero, which Jeffries and civil rights groups condemned as racist.

Some of these posts were misinformation regarding policies, including one video that promoted a so-called “medbed”— a hospital technology that does not exist, but has been a conspiracy theory running throughout [QAnon circles](#) online.

Earlier this year, Trump shared [an AI-generated video](#) of “Trump Gaza,” which imagined the Gaza Strip as a Dubai-style resort. The clip, originally created by independent producers as a parody of Trump’s rhetoric, was reposted by the President and widely interpreted as an endorsement of [his earlier suggestion](#) to “level” Gaza and develop a “Riviera of the Middle East.” The video prompted condemnation from Western and Arab leaders alike.

Cayce Myers, professor of communication at Virginia Tech, warns that these videos have more “traction” and “resonance” than static images, and could usher in a new era of political messaging.

But in doing so, Trump and his communications team are able to leverage AI as a way to reach younger voters. “It’s part of this larger conversation around where the Gen Z voters see themselves,” Myers tells TIME. “Gen Z is very different from older generations, and they also seem to have a greater appetite for that kind of commentary, that kind of visual commentary.”

This shift reflects how political communication has changed in tone and tolerance in recent years. “I think that we’re in a political space where the appetite for political content that would in previous generations be seen as distasteful, is now palatable,” he says.

Bret Schafer, senior fellow in media and digital disinformation at the Alliance for Securing Democracy, says it is a “complete shift” in how political communication works.

“The use of memes and the use of what we used to consider stuff that would exist in the worlds of Reddit, now has drifted into the discourse of elected leaders,” he says. “I don’t think it is good for our kind of political discourse in this country to adopt the online style of podcasters, vloggers, and partisan communicators.”

A new frontier for misinformation

Experts warn that Trump’s growing use of AI coincides with a rapid improvement in generative technology. Ben Colman, CEO of the deepfake-detection firm Reality Defender, says new tools – such as OpenAI’s Sora 2, an advanced text-to-video generator, are producing more realistic and accessible AI media than ever before.

“It’s better quality, but better quality for really bad use cases,” Colman tells TIME. “Generative AI and deepfakes are accelerating misinformation, scams, and attacks on elected officials, minorities, and women. The platforms are effectively marketplaces for attention, and it’s a better return on investment if you’re trying to generate attention to extreme views.”

“This isn’t limited to one party, audience, or belief. Everyone is doing it to everyone, and everyone is vulnerable regardless of notability or background.”

This rise of AI-driven propaganda poses new challenges for regulators. According to Myers, the Trump Administration’s approach to AI has been largely hands-off, favoring private-sector innovation over oversight. [Executive Orders](#) have focused on curbing “woke” influence in government-funded AI projects and declaring that the U.S. must “achieve global dominance in artificial intelligence.”

Meanwhile, Elon Musk, who worked in the Trump administration, has aligned his company xAI with similar ideological messaging. Grok, its conversational AI platform, has been criticized for promoting inflammatory content and right-wing conspiracy theories – at one point [generating](#) what users called a “Nazi bender.” As generative video tools become cheaper and more advanced, Myers predicts the political use of AI will only expand. “It’s not just some sort of one off post,” he says. “It’s creating an agenda and creating a national dialog around a particular issue. It’s using a kind of comedic satire through AI generative video to shape that agenda,” he says.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DdaeHK44F0>

Les réseaux sociaux au service de Trump ? | Une leçon de géopolitique | ARTE

24 janvier 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyPiooT6vdU>

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