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Trump Demanding Cut From Microsoft TikTok Sale Akin to 'Extortion,' Critics Say

BY **JASON MURDOCK** ON 8/4/20 AT 5:17 AM EDT



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TIKTOK

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President Donald Trump's assertion that the U.S. should get a "big percentage" cut from any sale of TikTok has been likened to "extortion" by critics.

Questioned about the proposal at a briefing yesterday evening, Trump doubled down on an earlier statement that the U.S. Treasury should get a "substantial portion" of money from any future TikTok acquisition as it helped to facilitate the deal.

"Whether it's Microsoft or somebody else, or it was the Chinese, what the price is, the United States should get a very large percentage of that price because we're making it possible," Trump said, before elaborating on the source of the cash.

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He added: "Whatever the number is, it would come from the sale, which nobody else would be thinking about, but me. But that's the way I think. I think it's very fair."

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While it's unclear what legal authority he will operate under, the president threatened to halt TikTok's operations in the U.S. because it is "too big, too invasive." Microsoft confirmed Sunday it is exploring a partial takeover of TikTok's operations.

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Trump confirmed he had given Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella until September 15 to hash out any business deal with the app. Political opponents say TikTok is a possible security risk, citing its ownership by a Beijing-based tech firm called ByteDance.

"Maybe a deal is going to be made. It's a great asset. But it's not a great asset in the United States unless they have the approval of the United States," Trump said.

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buy it and work out a deal—an appropriate deal. So the Treasury of the—really, the Treasury... of the United States gets a lot of money. A lot of money. Okay?" he added.

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The unconventional proposal about a Treasury kick-back alarmed commentators and media outlets, which noted it was similar to an extortion tactic; the White House letting the app operate in the region and reach a large U.S. audience—for a price.

Bloomberg reported the U.S. government receiving a slice of a purchase involving firms that it does hold a stake would be "unprecedented based on recent history." Axios' Dan Primack said Trump's proposal was "skating very close to announcing extortion."

The sentiment spilled onto Twitter. Sharing a story to his 62,000 followers, social media commentator Matt Navarra wrote: "This sounds a lot like extortion by Trump."

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Michael R. Bromwich, former Department of Justice Inspector General, tweeted: "When extortion/bribery is a way of life... This is becoming a more overt RICO [Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act] enterprise with each passing day."

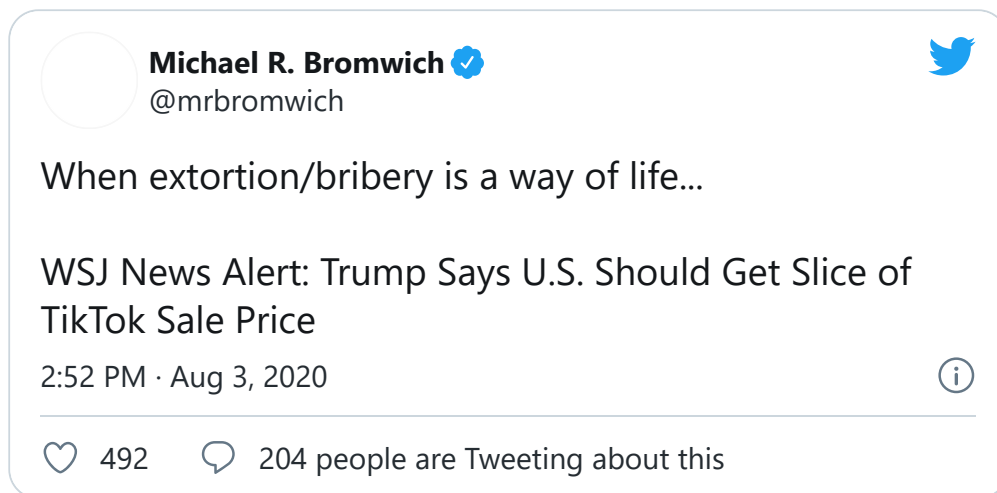
Emeritus professor of government of the University of Manchester, Colin Talbot, noted: "Trump running the USA like some sort of criminal extortion racket?"

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initial tweet. He is literally saying part of the purchase price must go to Treasury because there's no deal w/out the WH approval. Don't see how that's anything but extortion."

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In a [blog post](#), Microsoft said it is "committed to acquiring TikTok subject to a complete security review and providing proper economic benefits to the United States, including the United States Treasury," potentially referencing the proposed agency payout.



One widely-shared tweet that attracted 1,000-plus shares, by body language expert and physician Dr. Jack Brown, [suggested](#): "Trump is muscling TikTok to sell and he wants the Treasury Dept. to get a cut of the sale—these are extortion/mob tactics."

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It remains unknown if the Microsoft-TikTok deal will go ahead. The tech giant [said](#) it will seek to buy the brand's operations in the U.S. Canada, Australia, and

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and held domestically.

According to Reuters, the negotiations are being overseen by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS). For now, it's also unclear what would happen if the September 15 deadline passes without a formal offer, and how the U.S. government plans to stop the app from being used by millions of people inside the country.

President Donald Trump speaks during a news conference in the James Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House on August 3, 2020 in Washington, DC.

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