

The Deadline for Ditching WhatsApp

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Facebook has declared its intentions for WhatsApp – and it's not great news for business users (or anyone else for that matter). David Holman, Director and Co-Founder of Armour Comms explains.

Data is moving West!

We are seeing a worrying trend where tech behemoths are moving data away from the EU and back to the US, possibly, to avoid stringent GDPR data regulations. WhatsApp has recently introduced a new policy for users outside of the EU where users are forced to agree to share their personal information with other Facebook companies. Details here: [The Register.com](https://www.theregister.com/2021/01/06/whatsapp_privacy_policy_demand/)
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The original deadline for providing this permission was 8 February, after which time dissenting users will no longer be able to use the app. Due to public outcry and a mass exodus to other messaging platforms, the deadline has now been postponed to later in the year, BUT, we can see the direction of travel. Users who already have privacy settings blocking sharing of their information will retain that protection, but for anyone else they could be giving up personal info such as names, profile pictures, status updates, phone numbers, contacts lists, IP addresses, mobile device model, operating system, network carrier, etc. and – if you engage with businesses via the app – sensitive details such as shipping addresses and the amount of money spent on orders.

Facebook looking for ROI?

When Facebook acquired WhatsApp in 2014 they stated that they would not look to monetise the WhatsApp user base for 5 years. Those 5 years are now passed, and it is to be expected that Facebook will look to recoup its investment (some \$22bn). They initiated this with their drive to get businesses taking orders and providing support to customers over WhatsApp, and all that information could end up stored on Facebook's servers if businesses opt to store it there. While WhatsApp currently states that contact details will not be shared with Facebook for advertising purposes, they could be in future.

Data fallout from Brexit

Just before Christmas we saw a story that Facebook is moving the responsibility and legal obligations for UK users from its operations in Dublin to the US, due to Brexit and the UK's changing relationship with the EU, albeit they also regard the UK as still being part of their "EU region". [Reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-eu-facebook-exclusive/exclusive-facebook-to-move-uk-users-to-california-terms-av)

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Google made a similar announcement earlier in the year.

GDPR still applies, WhatsApp is NOT suitable for Business Use

At the moment, the UK's data protection laws mirror those of GDPR. For this reason alone, WhatsApp, and some other consumer-grade, social media messaging platforms, are not suitable for business use – and never have been. Some industry bodies, such as the Finance Conduct Authority are warning against its use: [FTAdvisor.com](https://www.ftadviser.com)

(<https://www.ftadviser.com/regulation/2021/01/11/fca-warns-advisers-on-using-whatsapp-and-social-media/>)

This latest change to its Terms and Conditions indicates Facebook's ongoing intention to monetise its

users, potentially opening up its options for dealing with UK users' data, particularly in the advent of a UK and US trade deal, that includes handling data.

Armour's White Paper: Why WhatsApp is Not Suitable for the Workplace
(<https://www.armourcomms.com/whatsapp-white-paper-request/>).

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About David Holman

David Holman, Director and Co-Founder, has held a variety of sales and general management positions within international organisations in the IT and security industry. David has been a Non-Executive Director for a number of start up companies in the security industry more recently, CEO and co-founder of Becrypt, where he was instrumental in growing the business to £10m revenue and profitability. David has sat on various Government/industry committees including CIPCOG (chaired by the Cabinet Office) to promote the importance of security products.

About Armour Comms

Armour® Communications Limited is a UK based company supplying market leading technology for secure communication via 3/4/5G, Wi-Fi and satellite for voice, video, messaging and data on Android, iOS, Windows, Linux and macOS platforms. Armour Mobile features in-built secure conferencing (audio and video) between multiple callers. SigNet by Armour provides similar end-user features with enhanced AES 256 bit peer to peer encryption.

Armour Mobile and SigNet by Armour® are available as Cloud or On-Premises solutions. If required Armour's technology can interoperate with SIP based PBXs and commonly used UC installations. Armour Mobile and SigNet by Armour enable users inside and external to an organisation to communicate transparently within a secure and private environment, while taking advantage of the reduced costs and increased flexibility provided by Voice over IP corporate communications.

Armour's products include FIPS, NATO and CPA approved offerings up to OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE, with solutions via selected Armour partners available to mitigate threats up to SECRET. Armour's products are trusted by Government departments, banks, law enforcement, defence and health organisations, and enterprises around the world.

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