

U.S. STRIKES DEAL WITH GOOGLE OVER SEARCH WARRANT DATA LOSS

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A file photo of the Google logo | Photo Credit: REUTERS

The U.S. Justice Department said on Tuesday it reached an agreement with Alphabet Inc.'s Google resolving a dispute with the search engine giant over the loss of data responsive to a 2016 search warrant.

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The government said it was a "first-of-its-kind resolution" that would result in Google reforming "its legal process compliance program to ensure timely and complete responses to legal process such as subpoenas and search warrants."

"The department is committed to ensuring that electronic communications providers comply with court orders to protect and facilitate criminal investigations," said Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Polite, who heads the Justice Department's Criminal Division, saying it "demonstrates the department's resolve in ensuring that technology companies, such as Google, provide prompt and complete responses to legal process to ensure public safety and bring offenders to justice."

Google, which did not immediately comment, told a U.S. court it had spent over \$90 million "on additional resources, systems, and staffing to implement legal process compliance program improvements."

The Justice Department said an independent compliance professional will be hired to serve as an outside third-party related to Google's compliance upgrades.

In 2016, the United States obtained a search warrant in California for data held at Google related to the investigation of the [criminal cryptocurrency exchange BTC-e](#), the department said.

Later the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit ruled search warrants issued under the Stored Communications Act (SCA) did not cover data stored outside of the United States.

In 2018, Congress clarified the SCA did cover U.S. providers chose to store overseas but the government said "in the intervening time, data responsive to the warrant was lost," the Justice Department said.

Google will assemble reports and updates regarding the compliance program that will go to the government, the Google Compliance Steering Committee and Alphabet board committees.

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