

U.S. Justice Department Considers a Rare Antitrust Move: Breaking Up Google

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A bid to break up Alphabet Inc.'s Google is one of the options being considered by the Justice Department after a landmark court ruling found that the company [monopolized the online search market](#), according to people with knowledge of the deliberations.

The move would be Washington's first push to dismantle a company for illegal monopolization since unsuccessful efforts to break up Microsoft Corp. two decades ago. Less severe options include forcing Google to share more data with competitors and measures to prevent it from gaining an unfair advantage in AI products, said the people, who asked not to be identified discussing private conversations.

Alphabet shares were down 3.8% at 10:13 a.m. in New York, the most since Aug. 5, when a federal judge ruled the company has an illegal monopoly in the search market.

Regardless, the government will likely seek a ban on the type of exclusive contracts that were at the center of its case against Google. If the Justice Department pushes ahead with a breakup plan, the most likely units for divestment are the Android operating system and Google's web browser Chrome, said the people. Officials are also looking at trying to force a possible sale of AdWords, the platform the company uses to sell text advertising, one of the people said.

The Justice Department discussions have intensified in the wake of Judge Amit Mehta's Aug. 5 ruling that Google illegally monopolized the markets of online search and search text ads. Google has said it will appeal that decision, but Mehta has ordered both sides to begin plans for the second phase of the case, which will involve the government's proposals for restoring competition, including a possible breakup request.

A Google spokesman declined to comment on the possible remedy. A Justice Department spokeswoman also declined to comment.

The U.S. plan will need to be accepted by Mehta, who would direct the company to comply. A forced breakup of Google would be the biggest of a U.S. company since AT&T was dismantled in the 1980s.

Justice Department attorneys, who have been consulting with companies affected by Google's practices, have raised concerns in their discussions that the company's search dominance gives it advantages in developing artificial intelligence technology, the people said. As part of a remedy, the government might seek to stop the company from forcing

websites to allow their content to be used for some of Google's AI products in order to appear in search results.

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