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Google in China (B)

On March 22, 2010, David Drummond, Google's senior vice president for corporate development and chief legal officer, posted the following memo on the official Google blog site. The memo was titled "A new approach to China: an update."¹

"On January 12, we announced on this blog that Google and more than twenty other U.S. companies had been the victims of a sophisticated cyber attack originating from China, and that during our investigation into these attacks we had uncovered evidence to suggest that the Gmail accounts of dozens of human rights activists connected with China were being routinely accessed by third parties, most likely via phishing scams or malware placed on their computers. We also made clear that these attacks and the surveillance they uncovered—combined with attempts over the last year to further limit free speech on the web in China including the persistent blocking of websites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google Docs and Blogger—had led us to conclude that we could no longer continue censoring our results on Google.cn.

So earlier today we stopped censoring our search services—Google Search, Google News, and Google Images—on Google.cn. Users visiting Google.cn are now being redirected to Google.com.hk, where we are offering uncensored search in simplified Chinese, specifically designed for users in mainland China and delivered via our servers in Hong Kong. Users in Hong Kong will continue to receive their existing uncensored, traditional Chinese service, also from Google.com.hk. Due to the increased load on our Hong Kong servers and the complicated nature of these changes, users may see some slowdown in service or find some products temporarily inaccessible as we switch everything over.

Figuring out how to make good on our promise to stop censoring search on Google.cn has been hard. We want as many people in the world as possible to have access to our services, including users in mainland China, yet the Chinese government has been crystal clear throughout our discussions that self-censorship is a non-negotiable legal requirement. We believe this new approach of providing uncensored search in simplified Chinese from Google.com.hk is a sensible solution to the challenges we've faced—it's entirely legal and will meaningfully increase access to information for people in China. We very much hope that the Chinese government respects our decision, though we are well aware that it could at any time block access to our services. We will therefore be carefully monitoring access issues, and have created this new web page, which will update regularly each day, so that everyone can see which Google services are available in China.

In terms of Google's wider business operations, we intend to continue R&D work in China and also to maintain a sales presence there, though the size of the sales team will obviously be partially dependent on the ability of mainland Chinese users to access Google.com.hk. Finally, we would like to make clear that all these decisions have been driven and implemented by our executives in the United States, and that none of our employees in China can, or should, be held responsible for them. Despite all the uncertainty and difficulties they have faced since we made our announcement in January, they have continued to focus on service our Chinese users and customers. We are immensely proud of them."

¹ The Official Google Blog, <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2010/03/new-approach-to-china-update.html>, accessed March 31, 2010.

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