

# China: Clinton Internet speech harms ties with US

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Writer

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A Chinese flag flutters near the Google logo on top of Google's China headquarters in Beijing, China, Friday, Jan. 22, 2010. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton on Thursday urged China to investigate cyber intrusions that led search engine Google to threaten to pull out of that country, and challenged Beijing to openly publish its findings. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

(AP) -- China rejected Friday a call by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton for the lifting of restrictions on the Internet in the communist country, denouncing her criticism as false and damaging to bilateral ties.

A state-run newspaper labeled the appeal from Washington as "information imperialism."

Clinton's speech Thursday elevated the issue of [Internet freedom](#) in the U.S. human rights agenda as never before. She urged China to investigate cyber intrusions that recently prompted search engine Google to threaten to pull out of the country.

"Regarding comments that contradict facts and harm China-U.S. relations, we are firmly opposed," Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu said in a statement posted Friday on the ministry's Web site.

"We urge the U.S. side to respect facts and stop using the so-called freedom of the Internet to make unjustified accusations against China," the statement said.

In her speech in Washington, Clinton cited China as among a number of countries where there has been "a spike in threats to the free flow of information" over the past year. She also named Tunisia, Uzbekistan, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam.

Ma defended China's policies promoting the Web, saying the nation boasted more than 380 million users, 3.6 million Web sites, and 180 million blogs.

"The Chinese Internet is open and China is the country witnessing the most active development of the Internet," Ma said, adding that China regulated the Web according to law and in keeping with its "national conditions and cultural traditions."

Internet control is considered a crucial matter of state security in China, and Beijing is not expected to offer any concessions to the U.S. Beijing promotes Internet use for commerce, but heavily censors content it deems pornographic, anti-social or politically subversive.

Chinese cyber police troll the Web for sensitive content, and many

foreign news and social media sites, including Twitter, [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#), are permanently blocked. Following ethnic rioting in Xinjiang last summer, authorities cut off public Web access entirely to the western region, portions of which they have only recently begun restoring.

Clinton's speech came on the heels of a Jan. 12 threat from Google to pull out of China unless the government relented on rules requiring the censorship of content the Communist Party considers subversive. The ultimatum came after Google said it had uncovered a computer attack that tried to plunder its software coding and the e-mail accounts of human rights activists protesting Chinese policies.

Eric Schmidt, Google's chief executive, said Thursday that the company hoped to find a way to maintain a presence in China but intended to stop censoring search results within "a reasonably short time."

U.S. State Department officials have said they intend to lodge a formal complaint with Chinese officials soon over the Google matter. Clinton not only urged China to investigate the cyber intrusions but openly publish its findings.

China has sought to downplay the Google dispute and Ma repeated China's standard line that its laws ban hacking and that it was a leading target for cyber crime.

On Thursday, Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei was quoted by the official Xinhua News Agency as saying the [Google](#) case "should not be linked with relations between the two governments and countries; otherwise, it's an over-interpretation."

Clinton's speech was also denounced by an official newspaper Friday as part of a U.S. campaign to impose its values and denigrate other cultures,

labeling it "information imperialism."

China must defend itself from information from the West that comes "loaded with aggressive rhetoric against those countries that do not follow their lead," said the English-language Global Times, published by the Communist Party's official People's Daily as part of a government-sponsored campaign to develop international media and influence opinion about China overseas.

"Unlike advanced Western countries, Chinese society is still vulnerable to the effect of multifarious information flowing in, especially when it is for creating disorder," the newspaper said. It offered no examples.

As part of Washington's promotion of Internet freedoms, U.S. diplomats in China have reached out to bloggers as a method of skirting Beijing's Internet controls, sometimes called the "Great Firewall of [China](#)."

On Friday, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and consulates in Shanghai and Guangzhou were hosting Internet-streamed discussions with members of the blogging community to "share insights and answer questions about Clinton's speech," the embassy said.

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