

Google welcomes chance to export to Iran, Cuba

March 9 2010, By FRANK JORDANS , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- A senior Google executive welcomed on Tuesday a U.S. decision to relax restrictions on exporting Internet communications services to Iran, Sudan and Cuba.

Bob Boorstin, Google's director of policy communications, said the Web search company would now be able to offer some of its other products in those countries, such as the mapping satellite software [Google Earth](#), photo management program Picasa and Internet chat client Google Talk.

"This is a great accomplishment," Boorstin told a human rights meeting in Geneva. "We are hopeful this will help people like yourselves in this room and activists all over the world take a small step down what is certainly a long road ahead."

The U.S. Treasury Department said the change to existing trade sanctions was intended to help people "exercise their most basic rights" with the help of instant messaging service and e-mail.

Google itself has come under fire recently in countries where it operates.

Last month, an Italian court held three Google executives criminally responsible for violating the country's [privacy laws](#) for allowing a video of an autistic teenager being bullied to be posted online.

In January, Google threatened to leave China over attempts to snoop on Chinese dissidents' Gmail accounts from inside the country. China's

government denies any involvement.

Boorstin described the Italian court's decision as a form of "[Internet censorship](#)" that would "encourage repressive regimes."

"From now on, you're criminally responsible for anything that appears on your Web site," he said. "That's certainly going to have a chilling effect on what people are willing to put up."

On China, Boorstin said Google was already offering a "a censored search engine" through the Google.cn domain to avoid meeting Chinese requirements for storing sensitive data about its users on servers in the country.

"If and when we pull out of China and turn off Google.cn, I'm afraid that we will be taking away from the Chinese populace a tool that they have come to value," he said.

Boorstin encouraged human rights activists also to rely on platforms other than the Internet for transmitting information.

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