

Google still considering how to proceed in China

March 2 2010, By JOELLE TESSLER , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- A Google Inc. executive said Tuesday that the company is still considering its next step in China - seven weeks after it pledged to stop censoring search results there and threatened to pull out of the country altogether.

Google Vice President and Deputy General Counsel Nicole Wong told the Senate Judiciary Committee that the company is continuing to investigate a hacking attack that emanated from China and attempts to snoop on dissidents' e-mail.

Since disclosing the incident in January, [Google](#) has called on the [Chinese government](#) to stop requiring it to remove links to Web sites that the government deems subversive or offensive. The company is in talks with Chinese officials to try to reach an agreement that would allow it to continue to do business there.

"The attack on our corporate infrastructure and the surveillance it uncovered - as well as attempts over the past year to limit free speech on the Web even further - led us to conclude that we are no longer willing to censor our search results in [China](#) and we are currently reviewing our options," Wong said.

Google's stance still drew praise from Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin of Illinois, who chaired Tuesday's hearing. Durbin said he intends to introduce a bill that would require Internet companies to follow a code of conduct for doing business in countries that restrict free

speech and human rights. Durbin said his bill would subject companies that don't take "reasonable steps to protect human rights" to civil or criminal penalties.

Under a voluntary program in effect now, participating companies pledge to protect the privacy of their users and minimize the impact of government restrictions on freedom of expression. Google, [Microsoft Corp.](#) and Yahoo Inc. established the program in October 2008. But Durbin complained Tuesday that no companies have joined since then.

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