

China jails seller of VPN services

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In this Aug. 19, 2013, file photo, computer users sit near a monitor display with a message from the Chinese police on the proper use of the Internet at an Internet cafe in Beijing. A Chinese official newspaper says an entrepreneur has been sentenced to 5 ½ years in prison in December 2017 for selling virtual private network service amid a campaign by Beijing to stamp out technology that evades its internet filters. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan, File)

A Chinese entrepreneur has been sentenced to 5 ½ years in prison for selling virtual private network service, a government newspaper said, as Beijing tries to stamp out use of technology that evades its internet

filters.

Wu Xiangyang also was fined 500,000 yuan (\$76,000) by the court in the southern region of Guangxi for operating his business without required licenses from 2013 until this June, according to the Procuratorate Daily. It said he was convicted of collecting "illegal revenue" of 792,638 yuan (\$120,500).

The ruling Communist Party tries to block China's internet users from seeing material deemed subversive or obscene. It is tightening control over VPNs, which create encrypted links between computers and can be used to see blocked websites.

The crackdown has disrupted work and study for millions of Chinese entrepreneurs, academics and other people.

The VPN crackdown is part of a campaign to tighten political control that activists say is the most severe since the 1989 suppression of the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement.

Regulators say only government-authorized VPNs will be allowed. One popular service, Green VPN, told customers in June it had been ordered to close. Others shut down without warning.

In March, a 26-year-old entrepreneur who sold VPN service in Dongguan, near Hong Kong, was sentenced to nine months in prison.

A software developer was arrested in August in Jiangsu province, near Shanghai, on charges he set up a business to sell unauthorized VPNs.

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