

China censors may have caused huge Internet outage

22 January 2014



Two Chinese men use their laptop computers at a cafe in Beijing on November 2, 2012

China's Internet suffered a massive breakdown as traffic was routed to an overseas site linked to the banned religious group Falun Gong—a fiasco a cyber-monitoring group Wednesday blamed on the country's own censors.

Web users in the country—which tightly restricts Internet access—had trouble accessing numerous sites for about an hour on Tuesday afternoon, said Greatfire.org, which tracks the vast Chinese online censorship apparatus known as the Great Firewall.

"We have conclusive evidence that this outage was caused by the Great Firewall," it said on its website, calling the incident "one of the largest Internet outages ever in China".

Internet users were sent to an IP address owned by US-based Dynamic Internet Technology, which runs a tool called FreeGate designed to bypass Chinese internet censors.

The IP address—65.49.2.178— is linked to

dongtaiwang.com, a news portal run by Falun Gong members, Greatfire.org said.

The state news agency Xinhua raised the possibility of hacking, and the official China Internet Network Information Centre attributed the breakdown to a "root server for top-level domain names".

But Greatfire.org cast doubt on those claims, citing technical tests and saying such an act was "not enough to cause this outage".

Falun Gong is a Buddhist-inspired religious group that was banned in China in 1999 and branded an "evil cult".

Dynamic Internet Technology lists as clients on its website the Epoch Times—a publication linked to the spiritual movement—along with Human Rights in China and other groups.

China's vast censorship apparatus proactively suppresses any information or websites online deemed sensitive, from popular sites such as Facebook and Twitter to a frequently updated list of search terms.

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