

Google CEO says 'important to explore' China project

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Google CEO Sundar Pichai addressed questions about China and the company's work with the US military at the Wired 25th anniversary conference in San Francisco

Google chief executive Sundar Pichai has acknowledged publicly for the first time that the tech giant is considering a search engine for China, saying it could offer "better information" to people than rival services.

Speaking at the Wired 25th anniversary conference late Monday, Pichai said Google leaders "feel obliged to think hard" about China despite criticism over the possibility of cooperating with Chinese censorship.

"We are always balancing a set of values," he said, while adding that "we also follow the rule of law in every country."

Pichai described Project Dragonfly, which has drawn criticism from Google employees, lawmakers and [human rights activists](#), as an effort to learn about what Google could offer if it resumed its search operations in China.

"It turns out we would be able to serve well over 99

percent of the (search) queries," he said onstage in a question-and-answer session.

"And there are many, many areas where we would provide better [information](#) than what is available."

Pichai offered no details on the status of the effort but said he was taking a "long-term view" on China.

"We don't know whether we would or could do this in China but we felt it was important to explore," he said.

"I think it's important for us given how important the market is and how many users there are. We feel obliged to think hard about this."

He said one area where Google's presence could help in China would be for information on medical treatments including for cancer.

"Today people either get fake cancer treatments or they actually get useful information," he said.

Google shut down its [search engine](#) in China in 2010, refusing Beijing's requirement to censor [search](#) results.

Pichai also addressed Google's decision to withdraw from a bid for a major Pentagon cloud computing project, saying the company was not opposed to working with the military but did not want to be part of automated weapons.

"We do work with the (US) military and deeply respect what they do to protect our country," he said.

Pichai added that Google continues to work on projects with the military on cybersecurity and transportation planning, for example but that "where we are being more deliberate is where AI (artificial intelligence) is used for autonomous weaponry."

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