

Chinese regime mandates monitoring software on all China computers

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As bad as the polluted air might be, people in mainland China probably find one thing more suffocating: the Internet. Blocked from accessing alternate voices online by the Chinese regime, Chinese Internet users have had to resort to using proxy servers and other alternate means to access filtered content online.

But come July 1, even their traditional methods of breaking Internet censorship—through software such as GPass and others—might stop working, as the Chinese regime has mandated that all computers shipped after that date come pre-installed with a filtering and monitoring software.

The software, known as “Green Dam,” is built by Jinhui Computer System Engineering Co. The Chinese regime has announced that the purpose of the software would be to function as an “anti-porn” filtering software, but China watchers are skeptical about the claims, arguing that the software will be used to monitor Internet usage.

A Harvard Law School study indicates that the Chinese regime is more keen to block voices of dissent than pornography. The 2005 study found that filtering of pornographic content in China by the core filters was extremely poor: only 101 out of 752 (13.4 percent) pornographic sites tested were blocked. The same study found that Saudi Arabia had blocked 695 (86.2 percent) of those sites, and commercial Web filtering

applications blocked 70–90 percent of those sites.

Dr. John Palfrey, director of the Berkman Center for Internet & Society of Harvard University's Law School that conducted the study, provided more details about what was really blocked by China's filters in a January 2006 testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives. His team found that political content and other sensitive subjects were blocked at a much higher rate than pornography.

For example, 90 percent of sites related to The Epoch Times editorial series, “Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party,” were blocked; 82 percent of sites tested containing a derogatory version of Jiang Zemin's (the former top leader of China) name were blocked; and that 44–73 percent of sites related to Falun Gong, in both English and Chinese languages, were blocked as well.

The move comes amid other increasingly harsh measures taken by the Chinese communist regime to crack down on dissent. In recent weeks, Twitter, Flickr, and Hotmail have been blocked in China as the twentieth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre and the tenth anniversary of the persecution of Falun Gong approached.

The U.K. Telegraph newspaper reported that the Green Dam software can “allegedly transmit personal information and make it difficult for users to tell what access is being denied.”

The New York Times quoted Charles Mok, chairman of Hong



The Chinese regime has mandated that all computers sold in China must come with pre-installed censorship software. LIU JIN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kong's Internet Society as saying, “It's like downloading spyware onto your computer, but the government is the spy.” The Times article also quoted a user's complaints

from the Green Dam software's forum as saying, “I can't surf the Internet normally and it's affecting the operation of other software.” The comment was later deleted

from the software's Web site.

The Wall Street Journal, which broke the story last weekend, had reported that China's Ministry of Industry and Information

Technology had sent a notice to major computer manufacturers requiring them to have the software pre-loaded on computers that they sold after July 1. The Journal story also reported that computer makers were required to submit reports to the regime on how many units they had shipped with the software preloaded.

Little is known about Jinhui Computer System, the company that is reported to have built the software. A search on Google returns very little. The Associated Press quoted a company spokesperson as saying that Jinhui was based in Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan province, and that the software was developed after it won a 21 million yuan (CAD\$3.39 million) contract with the Chinese regime.

In the past, major networking companies in China have had the backing of the Chinese regime's top officials. For instance, Huawei, China's largest supplier of networking and telecom equipment, was founded in 1988 by Ren Zhengfei, a former officer of the Communist Party's People's Liberation Army and a member of the 12th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. A 2005 report by the non-profit RAND corporation's Project Air Force listed Huawei, along with three other “ostensibly” commercial IT firms, as being the “public face for, sprang from or are significantly engaged in joint research with state research institutes” that are affiliated with the Chinese regime's military institutions.



Looking at the entire environmental impact of a bus rather than just its emissions, gives a very different picture. CHRIS HONDROS/GETTY IMAGES

Mass transit not so eco-friendly, study finds

By EVAN MANTYK
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Gas-guzzling cars, like SUVs, have gotten the hall of shame treatment in recent years, while mass transit has been touted as an environmentally friendly alternative. But it's not so simple, according to a new study released by researchers at the University of California at Davis on Monday.

The study finds a different picture when the entire environmental impact of a vehicle over its life cycle is taken into consideration. Life cycle means looking at not just what comes out of an SUV's or bus's tailpipe, which is the current method, but what went into making the SUV or bus, what went into making the roads that they drive on, what went into their fuel production, and how many people are actually on board.

The picture that emerges is one that shows how an off-peak bus actually has a worse environmental impact than a suburbanite in his (or her) gas-guzzling SUV.

“Including life cycle component inventories results in around a 40 percent energy and greenhouse-gas increase over direct vehicle operation for autos while, for rail, there is about a doubling,” said research Mikhail Chester, according to Environmental Research Web.

Between the jargon, that means that a light rail may not be as envi-

ronmentally friendly as people have often painted it. While this may not mean a great deal to the average commuter, the shift in perspective could mean a big deal for public policy makers.

For example, a road full of environmentally friendly cars running on soy beans and good vibes (if such a thing were possible) would still be hurting the environment because all the electricity used to power the streetlights is created by burning fossil fuels.

“While policy has often focused on the vehicle's tailpipe emissions, our study shows that you may not want to focus on this component but somewhere else in the mode's life cycle,” said Chester.

One such policy error is the transportation industry's focus on sulfur emissions. A lot of research has been done to remove sulfur from petrol and diesel fuels, but the study finds that most of the sulfur emissions involved in the life of a car actually come from the electricity needed to manufacture it.

In its conclusion, the study acknowledges that the current focus on reducing the bad things that come out of tailpipes is appropriate, since it's the largest culprit. However, it makes the point that there are a variety of other factors at work, most notably in the area of infrastructure—meaning rail stations, roads, bridges, street lights, and so on.

Army repels Taliban in NW Pakistan after hotel blast

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (Reuters)—Pakistan launched a new operation against Taliban fighters in the northwest on Wednesday, June 10, a day after an attack on a luxury hotel in Peshawar killed at least nine people, including two foreign U.N. workers.

Taliban militants have stepped up attacks in cities since the army launched a campaign in April to clear Taliban fighters from a stronghold in Swat and other parts of northwest Pakistan.

More than 1,300 militants and 105 soldiers have been killed in Swat, and the army's resolve has heartened U.S. officials, who have been worried that nuclear-armed Pakistan could slide into chaos unless the Taliban's advance weren't stopped.

With the Swat offensive in its closing stages, the military said on Wednesday it had launched an operation in Bannu, 150 km southwest of Peshawar, after up to 800 militants slipped into the district.

“Gunships, artillery, and ground troops are being used in the operation,” a military official said on condition of anonymity, but he had no details on militant casualties.

Bannu lies at the gateway to the

Waziristan tribal region, another Taliban and al Qaeda stronghold, and the Islamist fighters aimed to raise havoc in other parts of the northwest, according to a military statement.

The attack on Peshawar's Pearl Continental, a hotel frequented by VIPs and foreigners visiting the capital of North West Frontier Province, will inevitably reinforce concerns over insecurity in Pakistan.

Less than a third of the hotel's 150 rooms were occupied, but the blast blew out all the windows, and caused several walls and a section of floors to collapse on the front side.

U.N. agencies issued statements saying five workers, including a Serbian man, a Philippine woman, and three Pakistanis, were among those killed in the assault on the Pearl Continental.

Qazi Jameel, a senior police official, told Reuters that nine people were killed in the Peshawar hotel attack, and rescuers were still looking for more victims.

The toll excludes dead militants and people still missing. Some officials gave higher tolls. A British and a Nigerian man, and a German woman were among more than 60

wounded.

Pakistan's decision to opt for military action in Swat has been helped by a shift in public opinion.

The U.S. envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke, said on Wednesday he had noticed a dramatic change in Pakistan's attitude toward fighting Islamist extremists during his visit there last week.

“What I saw on Pakistan on this trip was a slow emergence of a consensus behind the government's actions,” he told a news briefing.

That popular support might ebb if the welfare of some 2.5 million people displaced by the conflict in the northwest is mishandled.

The United Nations is heavily involved in relief efforts and about a dozen U.N. staff were staying at the Pearl Continental.

Security breach

Militants had shot their way into the forecourt and exploded a truck bomb in front of the lobby, evoking nightmarish memories of the attack on the Marriott hotel in Islamabad last September that killed 55 people.

News channels ran closed circuit television camera footage of the

checkpoint at the hotel gateway on the main road.

It showed a cyclist speaking to a security guard, who then returned to his cabin. As the cyclist pedaled through, a retractable metal barrier in the driveway was lowered.

A saloon car pulled in, briefly stopped and then sped over the lowered barrier toward the hotel, swiftly followed by a small truck. Another guard ran for cover as shots were fired.

Police said the bomb contained 500 kg of explosives, a similar size to the bomb at the Marriott.

The mangled truck used in the attack could be seen close to a crater 6 meters wide and one meter deep.

There was no claim of responsibility, but the Taliban have warned of retaliation because of the Swat offensive, and the style of attack was similar to recent others.

The Karachi share market's benchmark index lost 0.56 percent due to investor nerves over deteriorating security.

“Investors are fearful that there may be more attacks by militants in retaliation,” said Asad Iqbal, managing director at Ismail Iqbal Securities Ltd.

Millions of acres in the Amazon at risk under new measure

By ALOYSIO SANTOS
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A new measure approved by the Brazilian Senate on June 4 could affect the future of the Amazon.

Measure 458/09 would regulate and privatize 67 million acres of Amazonian land that is currently owned by the state. The land is worth \$35 billion, according to Greenpeace. However, because of the biological diversity of the land and its impact on the ecological balance of the planet, its actual value is immeasurable.

The measure passed with about only half the members of the Senate present. One opponent of the measure, Senator Marina Silva, tried to clarify the distortions in the text of the measure.

According to a letter Senator Silva wrote to Brazilian President Luiz Lula, “The objectives to establish rights, to promote justice and social integration, increase governmental management, and fight criminality,” were perverted.

Silva also objected to the gaps in the measure that give amnesty to those who criminally appropriated large portions of public lands, and now benefit from policies in the federal constitution that were intended to safeguard the rights of posseiros [peasant squatters].

Critics have a long list of objections to the measure. For example, one provision exempts properties of less than 400 acres from the need to be inspected for



A burnt tree lies down on a road along the Amazon rainforest, 270 km far from Tailandia, in Para, northern Brazil. The Brazilian Senate recently approved a measure to sell 67 million acres of the rain forest. ANTONIO SCORZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

regulation, opening the door to fraud on those lands.

The measure also makes it possible for private companies to own Amazonian land. But the internationalization of the Amazon to transnational companies, largely responsible for deforestation through burning and logging, would also enhance and accelerate the rain forest's destruction.

Sentiments in Senator Silva's speech in the federal Senate are being echoed by many Brazilians through blogs and petitions that oppose the measure. Many people are asking why the measure is being rushed and who is benefiting from privatizing Amazonian public lands.

According to the Comissao Pastoral da Terra, which conducts research

on land issues, between 1999 and 2008 there were 253 assassinations and 5,384 armed conflicts over land disputes in the Amazon, affecting 2.7 million people.

The final decision lies in the hands of President Lula. Critics hope he will prevent further damage to the Amazon by either modifying the measure or preventing it from taking effect.