



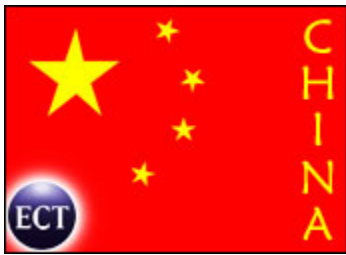
ALL TECH - ALL THE TIME

WEB 2.0

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## Chinese Censors Douse Lights on YouTube



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TechNewsWorld  
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YouTube has once again become the target of Chinese government censorship. Apparently, officials objected to recently posted video clips showing Chinese police thrashing monks during last year's uprising in Tibet.

Despite the vigorous efforts of the Chinese government to control what its citizens may view on the Internet, there are ways for the tech-savvy -- and courageous -- to connect with the outside.

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China reportedly has blocked access to [YouTube](#) without providing [Google](#) (Nasdaq: GOOG) which owns the video-sharing site, with any official explanation -- or even confirmation that it has indeed turned the site dark.

It's suspected that the government objected to recently uploaded videos of Chinese police beating Tibetan monks during last year's uprising. China has blocked access to YouTube in the past on similar grounds.

China's silence on the access blockage is standard operating procedure, according to Usha C. V. Haley, an Asia fellow at [Harvard Kennedy School](#) and author of the forthcoming book, *New Asian Emperors: The Business Strategies of the Overseas Chinese*.

The publication of a film clip of Chinese police beating Tibetan monks, she told TechNewsWorld, would give China's government more than ample reason for censorship.

### Iron Grip

It is little secret that China maintains a tight grip on its citizens' access to information. The country uses tens of thousands of censors to monitor content available for viewing within its borders, whether it's published internally or comes from outside sources.

Yet, if history is any guide, China will reopen access to YouTube either when the controversy

reaches a boiling point or when the offending material is removed -- or simply when it feels it has made its point.

The Chinese government's [relationship](#) with Web 2.0 technologies has been a coy one; the country has appeared to be comfortable, at times, with the flood of information the Internet delivers to its citizens -- only to abruptly shut off access when a Web site inflames one of its sensitive touch points.

Tibet is oftentimes that touch point, but anything that threatens China's perceived control over its citizenry is fair game.

When it hosted the Olympics last summer, for example, China [blocked access to Apple's iTunes](#), presumably in response to the addition of a pro-Tibet album to the much-trafficked online store. Several Chinese Olympic athletes had reportedly downloaded the album, which was an embarrassment to the government.

China has also blocked access to [Wikipedia](#) in the past -- supposedly over entries on [Tiananmen Square](#) -- but then [loosened its grip](#).

The Chinese government has mounted successful lobbying efforts in the past, persuading Google to remove offending material from the Chinese version of the [search engine](#).

Indeed, China is not at all shy about using its market heft to browbeat foreign companies into complying with its Internet policies. A few years ago, [Yahoo](#) (Nasdaq: YHOO) [provided Chinese authorities](#) with identifying information connected to an [email address](#), which exposed the author of anonymous blog postings about the Tiananmen Square massacre. A human rights organization subsequently filed suit against Yahoo [alleging that its cooperation](#) with the Chinese government resulted in the torture and 10-year jail term of Wang Xiaoning.

### Central Server

China is able to cut off access to certain sites because the Internet is routed to central servers that it controls, said the Kennedy School's Haley.

In addition to its human censors, China also maintains a very sophisticated content filtering system -- although its mechanics are a matter of speculation.

There are several technologies China could be using to filter content, such as extensive use of firewalls, said Christopher Ciabarra, a security consultant with [Network Intercept](#).


"All traffic runs through a firewall-like box, and they just block all IPs (Internet addresses) of YouTube," he told TechNewsWorld. "Another possibility is content-filtering machines. "Most likely, they use this method since it is the most common."

Such behavior is not specific to China. "There are many countries in Asia and outside of Asia

that have such controls over the Internet," Haley pointed out.

Turkey and Bangladesh have both blocked access to YouTube in the past, she noted.

There are ways to work around such blockages, but they're reserved for those who are technically savvy -- and very brave, considering some of the penalties.

Scan-on-the-Go Secure cards can encrypt traffic, thus eluding censorship from a government or ISP (Internet service provider), Ciabarra said. "Also, someone can get a connection around the country -- like dial-up to the United States -- to connect online." 

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