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Good afternoon. Thanks for inviting us to talk about this important issue. Jocelyn has taken you through where we've been as foreign correspondents in China, and I'd like to take you forward with the issues we continue to face. In particular, I want to make clear that we believe Chinese assistants and sources are coming under increasing pressure, a real roadblock to free and open reporting.

I also want to speak about the importance of free media for global economic issues and how China's information controls make it difficult for foreign correspondents to cover everything, including the economy.

Tiananmen 20th anniversary: The Umbrella Men.

On June 3 and 4th this year, Beijing's Tiananmen Square was filled with hundreds of people. Walking on to the square, it appeared that 80-90 percent of them were plainclothes army and police. Nearly all carried umbrellas, at first glance, to block them from the hot sun overhead.

As the hours wore on and foreign journalists appeared on the square to report about the 20th anniversary of the crushing of the Tiananmen democracy movement, it became clear that the hundreds of umbrellas served a dual purpose. They were used to physically block journalists and cameras from filming on the square. So, while from a distance, it appeared the square was full of tourists, up-close, it was clear that something else was going on.

I think this is a good example of the kind of "soft harassment" we've begun to see more of in recent months. It's less dangerous and less direct than what we saw in the past, but no less effective in preventing foreign correspondents from doing our jobs.

Continuing and new hurdles

The Foreign Correspondents' Club of China is in the midst of a new member survey right now and the results we're getting are interesting. The results are not scientific, but give us an idea of what individual members face:

About half of members who've taken the survey so far think the reporting climate in China is improving, which is consistent with when we first started asking this question. Still, many are concerned about pressing issues. About two-thirds of them have had some kind of official interference in their work over the past year. More than two-thirds of those who work with a research assistant say their employee has

been hassled or summoned for questioning by authorities. We've had several reports of sources facing repercussions.

Problems in covering Tibet in 2008

To give you an idea of how things might be changing, let's go back to Tibet in March of 2008. In the days following the Lhasa riots, foreign correspondents were shut out of Tibet. It's always been difficult for us to report in that region, given that entrance to Tibet requires a special permit. All foreigners are required to get a permit. Journalists are scrutinized more closely and often denied.

Last spring, foreign correspondents were repeatedly detained, harassed and sometimes forcibly prevented from doing their jobs across the Tibetan plateau. The FCCC logged more than 40 cases in which foreign correspondents were prevented from working. Outside of Tibet proper -- the area that technically doesn't require special travel permits -- foreign news crews were blocked and Chinese staff intimidated, and in at least one case, threatened with arrest.

SO you can see, it's not just foreign correspondents being harassed, but also the Chinese nationals involved in our work -- people for whom police action can have life-altering consequences. We seem to be witnessing a trend toward harassing and intimidating these people more -- blocking them from talking to us, warning them against helping us. Soft harassment, for example, where a police officer inserts himself into an interview, making it clear there may be consequences for the interviewee, has become fairly routine.

In July of 2008, I was the first American journalist to travel independently to Lhasa, I was allowed to move freely throughout the city. If anyone was following or listening to me, I didn't see them. But the city was so full of police and military, the main obstacle I had is that most residents -- both Tibetan and Chinese -- were too afraid to talk to me.

Access to Tibet and the region remains a problem to this day.

Xinjiang riots and coverage

More than a year later, we faced something similar with the uprising in Xinjiang on July 5. As you know, nearly 200 people were killed when Uighur protests in the capital Urumqi turned violent. What we saw in the days after marked a dramatic departure from the government's closed-door policy toward foreign journalists in Tibet.

Journalists were immediately allowed into Urumqi, and by most accounts, given freedom to interview and move about. There were logistical problems, but the general climate marked a significant change.

We'd like to hope the government recognized the value in allowing foreign correspondents to report on the ground.

Covering Xinjiang was not without problems. While Urumqi was relatively open, the far western city of Kashgar was closed. Officials denied the closure, but we've heard from several journalists attempting to travel to there, who were intercepted and ordered to leave.

Also, 2,000 miles away in Shaoguan, site of the toy factory murders that sparked the Xinjiang riots, the local driver of one foreign reporting crew was called in for police questioning after the reporters left town.

Additionally, two correspondents received anonymous death threats after writing about the Xinjiang unrest.

Given the shift and the fact that foreign journalists were allowed to report rather openly in Urumqi, we do see real potential for change. But there are trouble spots and continued problems.

As the rules have more aligned with international reporting standards, harassment and intimidation may be "going underground." The pressure seems more often directed at vulnerable Chinese sources and staff.

Emerging issues, pressure on Chinese staff

And in recent months, we've encountered a few new trouble areas:

At the beginning of the year, registered Chinese staff of foreign news bureaus in Beijing were called in for official meetings and training. New rules were issued to the assistants about proper behavior, including urging them to "promote positive stories about China" within their organizations. They were instructed that it was illegal for them to conduct independent reporting.

We believe this new code of conduct discriminates against Chinese news assistants. Foreign companies in other industries can freely hire PRC citizens as full-fledged employees. In addition, the code is a business restriction that places foreign media at a competitive disadvantage. Chinese journalists in most developed nations can hire local staff without such restrictions. In China, foreign media are obliged to hire staff through the government's Personnel Services Corporation.

Financial news services

Another troubling development is ongoing pressure on foreign financial news services – an area of tension that may stem from competition with China's homegrown financial news wires.

While political news is generally considered more sensitive, financial news is coming under greater scrutiny. Most financial indicators are widely circulated before being officially released. In the past, leaked figures would often find their way into Chinese and foreign media. But foreign media organizations have come under pressure -- including an implicit threat to investigate under the state secrets laws -- for publishing data not yet officially released.

The tightening of restrictions dates from the fall of 2008, and the global financial crisis. At that point, Chinese economists were urged to conform to the mainstream view on the economy and speak less to the media; controls over publishing leaked information were tightened.

Conclusion

So as you can see, while we've made significant gains, we still face critical issues: Namely Trying to maintain the safety of sources and Chinese staff, pressure over information that might present competition to Chinese media, and ongoing interference and harassment of the type we've seen for years.

Thanks and I look forward to your questions.