

**Testimony by Ambassador Mark Palmer**  
**Congressional-Executive Commission on China**  
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As the father of modern China, Sun Yat-sen once noted: “Worldwide trends are enormous and powerful; those who follow them prosper, and those who resist them perish.” The Internet is the most powerful force for progress in our lifetimes. The fact that more than four hundred million Chinese already are online testifies to its enormous importance for China.

At a time when Freedom House, the State Department and others have documented increasing censorship of the Internet, and an overall decline of human rights in China and across the globe, it is easy to become pessimistic about the Internet’s prospects. But I believe we need to look more deeply at recent history, at what the Chinese people themselves want, at what we can do to respond to their aspirations and at what the State Department for three years has refused to do.

The single most strategic failure of our best minds in the intelligence, journalist and academic communities over the past half century has been their failure to anticipate, indeed even allow for, peaceful democratic revolution. And yet some sixty such revolutions have occurred in countries as divergent as Indonesia, the Philippines, South Africa, Chile, and Ukraine.

We have neither understood what is going on in the minds of elites beneath the closed surface of dictatorships nor the power of students, women and others once they organize. We now know from his secretly tape-recorded, recently published memoir, that Zhao Ziyang, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, ultimately concluded that for China’s economic success to continue it must be accompanied by a modern political system with a free press, multiple party elections and an independent judiciary. His predecessor as General Secretary of the Communist Party Hu Yaobang was sacked for heading in the same direction.

Over eleven thousand of the most influential thinkers in China have signed in their own names Charter 08 which explicitly calls for all human rights to be respected and an “end to the practice of viewing words as crimes”.

I emphasize elite thinking because of my own experience over forty years of living in and working on European communist countries. While we caught glimpses of their views and debates when they were still in power, I participated in President Reagan’s first meetings with General Secretary Gorbachev and was close to the last communist leaders of Hungary, we now understand from numerous documents and interviews how deeply troubled senior and mid-level party officials were with their situations and how often just one man at the top or a small group of elders or security officials held back democratic

openings. And I have seen with my own eyes the Iron Curtain coming down across Europe -- something conventional wisdom thought was impossible.

Beyond elites, in China today it is quite extraordinary how many public protests take place every day and across the country, some 90,000 a year according to official statistics. The support for Google's splendid determination to resist censorship of the Internet speaks volumes about the desire of hundreds of millions to enjoy the same access and rights as their colleagues in Taiwan and across the developed world.

While Hu Jintao boasts about his own use of the Internet, he also has called for it to be "purified" and said "Whether we can cope with the Internet is a matter that affects .....the stability of the state." By which he means the stability of the one-party state. He is keenly aware that both elite and popular opinion, if allowed free rein on the Internet, will bring about the fall of communist dictatorship.

This fear of the Internet, of his own people and elites, has led Hu Jintao to unleash a truly massive program to control and censor the Internet. What can we do to ensure that the Chinese people circumvent these controls, to bring the Great Firewall down and not only in China but Iran and other increasingly repressive countries as well?

Some of the students who were present on Tiananmen Square during the 1989 massacre came to the United States and earned doctoral degrees in computer sciences from leading American universities. They realized the enormous popularity and potential of the Internet in China and were urged by Chinese still in China to find ways to use their computer engineering skills to combat growing censorship and growing overall violations of human rights.

Beginning in 2000 they have developed a system of software and servers, which over the past decade has grown to be the world's largest circumvention system, providing for roughly 90% of anti-censorship traffic in China and worldwide. About a million Chinese and hundreds of thousands of Iranians are frequent users of this system. It works through the distribution of encrypted, secure, free software and by constantly switching IP addresses, up to 10,000 times per hour, on dedicated servers located across the world. They have built and staffed this system with volunteer labor and virtually no financial support from others.

The major limitation on this Global Internet Freedom Consortium's (GIF) ability to serve even much larger numbers of users and to bring down the Firewall altogether is money. They have had to make hard choices between serving a surge in Iranian users last summer and fall and reducing their availability to Chinese users as their servers were crashing. GIF needs to buy many more servers and finally to support fulltime staff. Competing with and staying ahead of over 50,000 heavily financed engineers and censors in China requires a dedicated and properly financed team. We spend \$800 million annually on "old media" like VOA and RFA and an additional \$1.7 billion on democracy support. Surely we can and should spend \$50-100 million per year on a system or systems to circumvent Internet censorship and bring down this firewall.

Realizing the enormous success of this Global Internet Freedom Consortium and its potential, a bipartisan group of Senators and Congressmen appropriated \$15 million in 2008 to begin to scale up this system and any others which could demonstrate proven ability to circumvent internet censorship in China, Iran and elsewhere. And in 2010 another \$30 million was appropriated.

In my 26 years within the State Department and 20 years outside working on democracy and human rights, I have never been more convinced of the power of any innovation to help those still living in one of the world's 43 remaining dictatorships, half of them Chinese, to liberate themselves.

I also have never been more appalled at the State Department's refusal to do what is so clearly in the national interest of the United States. In flagrant and now repeated violation of Congressional legislation, the State Department has refused to use the appropriated funds to scale up an existing, successful circumvention system. State Department staff-level officials have made a mockery first of Secretary Rice's and now Secretary Clinton's frequently voiced and sincere commitments to help ensure freedom of the Internet.

Let us take just one dimension of American national interest. There is a profoundly false understanding of the Google-China issue -- as if Google must lose its China market because it no longer accepts Google.cn censorship. If the United States acts in the manner we seek, and people in China can access Google.com, sell Baidu stock short. And watch Google pick up support from Iran, Syria, and elsewhere. Google's in a fight and a martyred defeat will not help the cause. It too should be pressing the State Department and working with GIF. If it does so, its franchise throughout the world will be enhanced by orders of magnitude for being not merely a wounded victim but the provider of enhanced closed society access to the Internet.

Fortunately key members of Congress are determined that the State Department finally does the right thing. Senators Brownback, Casey, Kaufman, Kyl and Specter, three Democrats and two Republicans, wrote to Secretary Clinton on January 20, 2010. After expressing concern that the State Department's use of the FY08 funds "did not materially enhance Internet access", they stressed that "the FY10 Consolidated Appropriations Act requires as a matter of law that the Internet Freedom funds be awarded applicants who currently and demonstrably are able to expand Internet access to 'large numbers of users living in closed societies that have acutely hostile Internet environments. The intent of this language is clear: funds should facilitate immediate and order-of-magnitude scale-ups of proven, field-tested protocols that facilitate access to the Internet by pro-democracy demonstrators in Iran, China, and elsewhere'".

To get the State Department's attention, two weeks ago Senator Brownback put a hold on the confirmation of four ambassadorial and assistant secretary nominations. At a press conference on March 18<sup>th</sup>, the Senator citing renewed State Department interest removed these holds. But he stressed "the objective is clear, and delay is the chief ingredient of the problem. The funds must be rapidly dispersed to groups that possess the current

capability of immediately opening access to the Internet for millions of new users. One such group is the Global Internet Freedom Consortium, which operates the Freegate circumvention system relied upon by millions around the world. If there are others that can fulfill these criteria, then the State Department should come forward with clear and convincing evidence and we should support those groups as well.”

Senator Brownback continued “But we must act now. If we do not achieve a breakthrough in the next week, I will not hesitate to place holds on future State Department nominations for as long as it takes to move the Department away from policies that will keep the firewalls in business for years.” Senator Kyl also spoke at the March 18<sup>th</sup> press conference, affirmed that he shared Senator Brownback’s assessment and will join in future holds.

We strongly urge the Congressional-Executive Commission on China also to press the State Department to move promptly to work out an agreed strategy with concerned members of Congress.

We all agree that it is profoundly in our interest for the Chinese people to have direct and uncensored access to the Internet, that the censorship be circumvented and ultimately defeated. We have it in our power to achieve this goal. Further delay will be an act of moral cowardice and a failure of strategic vision.