

TIMELINE

Google in China: A timeline

Google is attempting to call a truce with China in its war over web censorship. An in-depth timeline of how the web giant has fared in the world's second largest internet market

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Google has attempted to call a truce in its war with China. The internet conglomerate has [moved its operations from China's mainland to Hong Kong](#), in an attempt to defuse the battle over censorship of its search results. Users of Google's Chinese language site are now being redirected to its Hong Kong site, which is uncensored. This is a "sensible solution to the challenges we've faced," said David Drummond, the firm's chief legal officer. Here's a timeline of how Google's skirmish with China has been fought to date:

September 4, 2002

China [blocks access to Google](#) for the first time. Although there is no official announcement, Internet users in the country report they are unable to access the company's main search page for [two weeks](#). From this point until the launch of google.cn in 2006, Chinese web users access Google through its main, uncensored google.com address.



Google has a long, complicated history with China. *Photo: Corbis*

November 2003

The "[Great Firewall of China](#)," a system able to block banned content from being downloaded to Chinese computers, becomes operational. Approximately [30,000 police](#) are said to examine search results and blog postings for anti-government material. While this does not restrict Google searches, it may lead to links that do not work because they are banned by the Chinese firewall.

June 16, 2004

Google [buys a minority stake in "Baidu"](#), the leading Chinese-language Internet search company, indicating its interest in the world's second largest internet market. It will [sell its stake](#) in Baidu in June 2006 to concentrate on growing its own business.

September 24, 2004

Google excises anti-government material from its Chinese search results for the first time. A "[handful](#)" of government-banned sites fail to show up on a Google News search from inside the country. Google

says the sites were left off for [technical reasons](#), but critics say the company is kowtowing to pressure from Beijing.

January 25, 2006

Google [sets up Google.cn](#), a Chinese language version of its search website. The company comes under fire for censoring web searches for political content, in accordance with the Chinese authorities' wishes. Protestors [wave placards outside its headquarters](#), and commentators compare them to "Nazi collaborators."

February 15, 2006

Google is [criticized at a Congressional hearing](#) for giving in to pressure from China to censor web content. Yahoo, Microsoft and Cisco are also named. Tom Lantos of the House International Relations subcommittee tells the four companies: "Your abhorrent actions in China are a disgrace."

January 2007

One year after launching a Chinese site, Google has [failed to take a hold on the market](#) like it has in the West. It has a 19% share of the market, second to Baidu's commanding 63% share. The company invests in Xunlei.com, a small start-up, and teams with China Mobile, the government-owned telecoms firm, to offer mobile content.

January 5, 2009

Google is one of 19 companies [criticized by the Chinese government](#) for failing to do enough to block pornography.

March 24, 2009

Access to YouTube, the video-sharing site owned by Google, is [blocked by the Chinese authorities](#) after a video of Chinese police officers beating Tibetan protesters appears on it. The block is lifted four days later.

June 19, 2009

Chinese authorities [disable some search functions](#) on Google.cn, reasoning that it links to pornographic and offensive content. Gmail is [inaccessible](#) for more than an hour.

July 2009

Google China's share of the internet search market [rises above 30% for the first time](#) in the first quarter of 2009, but is still second to Baidu, which retains around 60% of the home market.

January 12, 2010

Google announces it has been the victim of a "[highly sophisticated and targeted](#)" cyber attack originating in China, designed to access the e-mail accounts of Chinese human rights activists. It announces a "review" of its business operations in the country, and says it is "no longer willing to continue censoring" its results on Google.cn. It acknowledges this may mean the end of its business in the country.

February 4

Three weeks after Google's announcement, the company admits it has made "[zero changes](#)" to its

Chinese search engine and that discussions with Beijing remain positive.

March 10

Breaking the company's silence, Eric Schmidt, the chief executive officer of Google, says that "[something will happen soon](#)" in the standoff over internet censorship in China.

March 12

Li Yizhong, the minister of industry and information technology, says Google would be "[unfriendly and irresponsible](#)" not to comply with China's censorship laws.

March 15

After two months of talks between the two parties, the Chinese authorities let it be known that [Google.cn is likely to close](#). Sources within Google confirm this.

March 16

Media reports [suggest](#) Google has stopped censoring its Chinese site, with previously banned images such as the Tianamen Square protests now seen on the site. But the company [denies](#) it has ended censorship.

March 22

In what is seen as an "[attempt at a compromise](#)," Google shifts its operations from mainland China to Hong-Kong, where the country's censorship rules do not apply. Google.cn now has a message saying "Welcome to Google Search in China's new home."

Sources: [NYT](#), [BBC](#), [China Daily](#), [WSJ](#), [Reuters](#), [Guardian](#), [Google](#)